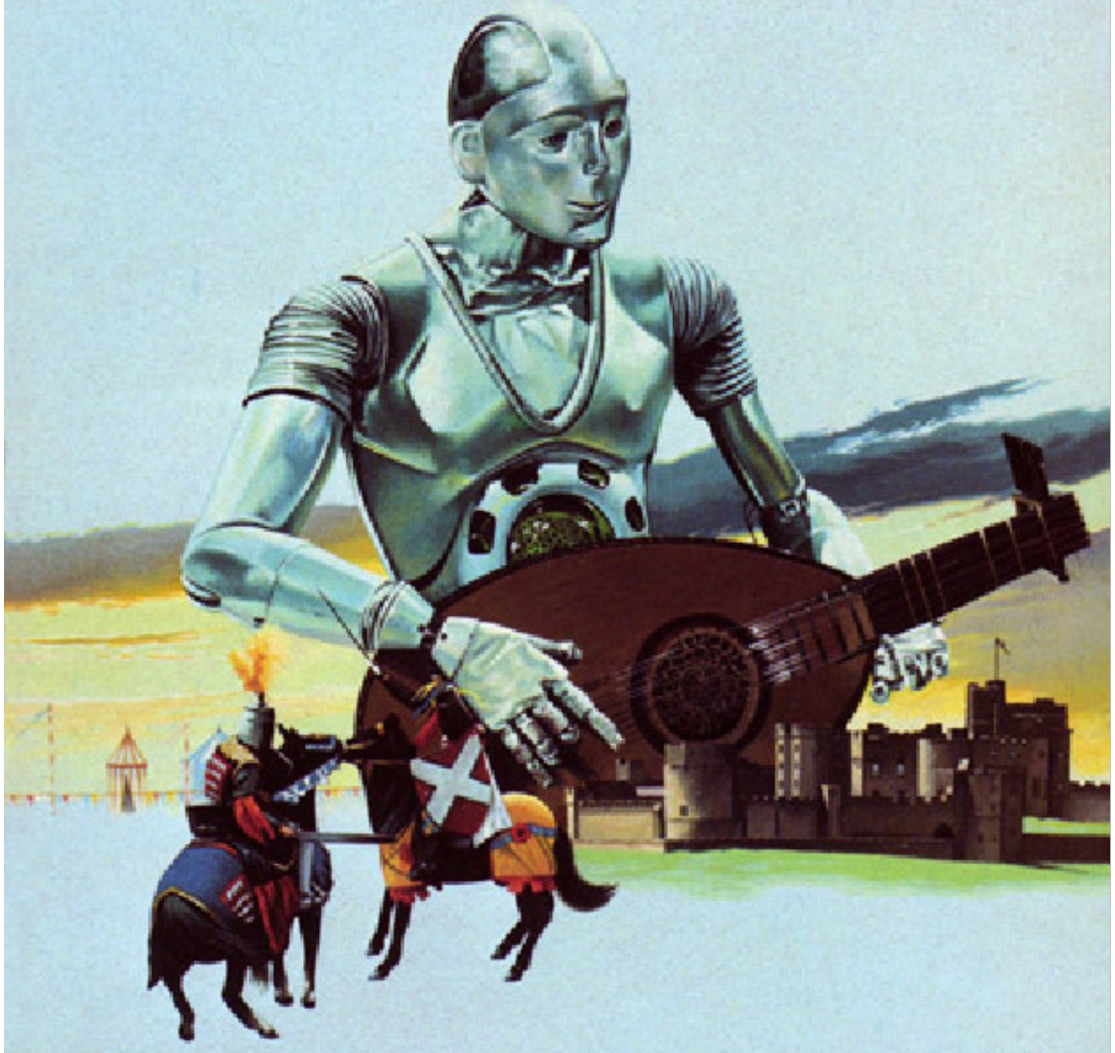
DOCTOR WHO

No. 108

THE KING'S DEMONS



TERENCE DUDLEY

TARGET

It is 4 March, 1215, and the TARDIS
materialises in England during a jousting match held in the presence of King John.

But it soon becomes apparent to the Doctor that something is very seriously wrong. Why does John express no fear or surprise at the time-travellers' sudden appearance, and indeed welcome them as the King's Demons?
And what is the true identity of Sir Gilles, the King's Champion?

Very soon the Doctor finds himself involved in a fiendish plan to alter the course of world history by one of his oldest and deadliest enemies.

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DOCTOR WHO
THE KING'S DEMONS

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1

The Challenge

The King tore the meat from the bone with his teeth and grunted his way through the mouthful of food with satisfaction. He gulped wine from his freshly filled goblet and took stock of his congenial surroundings. The huge fire warming his back threw great dancing shadows onto the vaulted masonry high above his head, giving more light to see by than the long tallow candles that lined the two banqueting tables. The minstrels sighed into their recorders and plucked at their lutes, being careful to pitch their performance below the muted conversation of the diners ranging the length of the laden board.

The King swallowed the warm wine slowly, with appreciation. He liked being King John of England, he decided. King John of England and a goodly part of France, even if he had lost the Duchy of Normandy to King Philip Augustus. That wasn't his fault, he couldn't be blamed for that.

He tossed the bone into the eager jaws of the watchful wolfhound which was panting and salivating on the reed-strewn flagstones.

The dog's teeth snapped the bone with a crack that echoed round the Great Hall of the castle, startling a number of the diners and drawing a growling laugh from the King, a laugh that was answered sycophantically by all who heard it, save for the frail-looking man of fifty summers who sat at the King's left hand.

Ranulf Fitzwilliam was worried; worried and not a little apprehensive. This wasn't the King he knew and loved, the King he'd served faithfully for nearly sixteen years. True, there had been setbacks in the war with France, and the battle of Bouvines had been a bitter blow to Englishmen, but there had been teverses before from which the King had come hounding back. Ranulf looked covertly at his royal guest. Even his manners at table had changed. His Majesty was never wont to scoff meat and swill wine in this way, without modesty, refinement, appearing for all the world like a starving Flemish mercenary. No, this wasn't the man he'd fought with and lived with in France but a year since, at grave cost to his own health.

The King took another swig at his goblet and Ranulf looked squarely at his sovereign, his eyes taking in the sleek, shining, black-bobbed hair, the neatly trimmed spade beard, the flashing eyes, the flared nostrils. To be sure, he looked like the King but, somehow, the man was *different*; as alien as the five French knights away to the right who laughed at the snorts of the feeding wolfhound and joked vociferously in a tongue Ranulf barely understood. He felt a touch on his hand and turned.

Isabella, his wife, shook her fair head very slightly as if secretly to say he shouldn't study the King so intently lest it be interpreted as a comment on unregal behaviour.

Isabella Fitzwilliam was fifteen years younger than her husband; a beautiful woman whose small, finely wrought features and steady, wide eyes suggested great strength of character. She shook her head again, with a barely perceptible movement, and smiled with the open radiance that Ranulf had first fallen in love with. He felt the light pressure of her hand and returned it through a knarled, battle-twisted finger. His eyes met those of his son who sat at Isabella's left. Hugh Fitzwilliam returned his father's look before the reproach in the boy's eyes gave way to embarrassment arid he dropped his gaze to the untouched food in front of him.

Uneasiness stirred in Ranulf, an uneasiness akin to guilt. He had told the boy so much about the King; had praised the man's courage and courtesy, his generosity of spirit and his fine generalship. How the King had lifted the siege of Mirebeau by a forced march from Le Mans across the River Loire to surprise the besiegers in the narrow streets before the sun had lightened the Anjou sky.

How, the battle won, clemency and compassion followed as naturally as day followed night. And yet there had been a marked absence of compassion at the stag hunt that very afternoon, when Hugh had fallen from his horse to be the butt of endless cruel jibes from the King and the sycophantic French knights.

How could Ranulf explain the King's behaviour to his troubled wife and son when he could find no explanation for it himself? This royal visit to Wallingford was as embarrassing as it had been unheralded. And for what? To demand yet more money for the Crusade to the Holy Land.

Had not Ranulf given his all but six months since, and given it gladly? How could the King come back for more and suggest, as he had, that Ranulf was being parsimonious, even disloyal, for pleading poverty? How could the King use him thus? He who had freely given his wealth and his health in loyal service to his sovereign lord?

Ranulf turned back to the King to find the metallic eyes fixed upon him.

'You have no appetite, my Lord,' observed the King evenly.

'No, my Liege.'

'Or is it that your meanness extends even to the food on your table?'

Humiliation raced with Ranulf's blood, less at the King's words than at Isabella catching her breath and the sudden, sharp movement from Hugh, stilled by his mother's hand.

A baying laugh broke from the man seated on the King's right. Sir Gilles Estram, the King's Champion, matched the charisma of his sovereign with the broad, warrior's shoulders and the mane of auburn hair flowing into the massive heard. He laughed again and turned to say something in French to the men on his right. They took up the laugh and, in a moment, the laughter had spread from the King's knights to those of Ranulf, and was echoed dutifully by the ladies, The King had spoken in jest. They knew this to be so for Ranulf Fitzwilliam was a generous Lord and renowned as such from Oxford to Windsor. And it was lese-majesty for the King's jest not to be applauded.

The muscles tightened in Hugh's jaw and he half rose to his feet before his mother increased her hold on his arm, compelling him to sit again. Isabella turned to her son and joined in the laughter, but there was no laughter in her eyes, only a silent warning. Hugh's fury turned to horror and then to loathing. Ranulf saw the emotions distorting his son's face and turned to the King as the laughter ebbed.

'Your Majesty is pleased to jest.'

'No, my Lord, we are not pleased to jest. We are no jester. Where are our bells?'

Another bellow of laughter belched from the line of Frenchmen, laughter picked up half-heartedly by the rest of the company which was beginning now to sense something more than merriment. Even the busy retainers and the preoccupied minstrels exchanged uneasy glances, for there was no amusement on the King's face, just the savage widening of the mouth exposing a rack of teeth, and the narrowing of glittering eyes.

'We do not jest, Lord Ranulf.'

The King crashed his empty goblet to the table with a force that caused the platters to jump and much of the company to wince. The minstrels were instantly quiet. The King swayed to his feet and the Great Hall reverberated to the sound of chairs arid stools scraping the flagstones as the assembled knights and ladies rose respectfully. Even the dogs cringed.

'This is a poor welcome, my Lord,' grated the King.

Ranulf faced his royal guest with a wonderment that gave way to a cold fear that gripped his heart and made him suddenly short of breath.

'But, sire!'

'Hear us!'

The King raised an imperious hand that demanded silence. He looked slowly over the shocked company as if to impress on it that his words were for everyone present.

not just the aged, ailing lord of the castle who stood before him as erect as his rheumatic joints would allow. The King lowered his hand to point at Ranulf accusingly.

'We are come to ask but a pittance. Three marks per knight's fee. A mere nothing to such as you whom we have allowed the pick of the booty on our campaigns. You obstruct the Crusade, my Lord, with your tight-fistedness.'

Ranulf took a deep breath and battled to still his shaking limbs. Clearly the King had taken too much wine, the fumes of which had lifted from his mind the memory of an earlier plea that more scutage from Wallingford Castle was not possible. Ranulf had thrown open the coffers himself to reveal but a few miserable marks, barely enough to sustain his family and household through the spring and summer until the next harvest.

'But your Grace already has my whole fortune ...

willingly given but six months since.' Ranulf choked and dragged more air into unwilling lungs. 'There is no more.

My coffers are empty.'

'He lies, my Liege!' roared Sir Gilles Estram.

'Not so!' cried Ranulf.

The King turned on his massive champion.

'Restrain your ardour, Sir Gilles,' he admonished blandly. 'You abuse our host. Your words are more generous than your purse, Lord Ranulf,' he went on with a sneer. 'If you speak truth ... if we have your whole fortune

... you insult us.'

Ranulf heard the words with a singing in his ears as if his King had struck him. The audible gasps in the Great Hall joined in a tremor that was suddenly hushed as Hugh Fitzwilliam advanced to his father's side. Isabella made no move to prevent him but straightened to her full height with her head erect on her long, delicate, vulnerable neck.

'Father?' said Hugh, as if to protest that the accusation was to go unanswered. Ranulf turned a wretched face to his son, afraid the boy would be provoked into rescuing him from the ruins of his dignity.

'Father?' repeated Hugh. But Ranulf couldn't find the breath to answer and Hugh faced the King in a movement that carried with it a threat.

The King's Champion swung from his position to place his bulk between his sovereign and the eighteen-years-old youth whose eyes blared with a rage that touched

on madness. Sir Gilles plucked a gauntlet from his sword belt and flung it to the floor at Ranulf's feet.

'You insult the King,' he snarled.

Ranulf didn't flinch, neither at the challenge nor at the sound of Isabella catching her breath. He had no choice but to accept combat with the King's Champion even though it meant certain death. He had known that it must come to this and his heart wasn't heavy at the thought of dying. it was something he had faced many times before.

His terrible sadness was that he had, in some way, offended his King to deserve such treatment, such ignominy under his own roof. Such was his grief that he could find it in his heart to welcome death rather than continue to endure the pain of this grave change in the person of the King he loved so well. But, for the sake of his wife and son, he would make one last appeal.

'Your Majesty ...' he began.

'You insult the King.' rasped Sir Gilles. 'Are you also craven?'

Ranulf looked into the eyes of King John, seeking there some glimmer, some dying ember of the fire that once warmed their almost fraternal relationship. But there was none. The ferrous eyes looked back unblinkingly through narrowed lids.

Ranulf stooped to pick up the gauntlet but Hugh reached it before him.

'No!' The sound was torn from Isabella as her son straightened with the gauntlet in his hand. She closed her eyes and prayed for her husband arid her son and for forgiveness from the blessed Virgin for disgracing them with her weakness.

But Hugh was speaking.

'My father is in poor health, Sir Gilles. He is no match for the King's Champion.'

'Ha!' exclaimed the King.

Hugh looked at him without attempting to hide his contempt and addressed the King, not his champion. as he went on. 'It surprises me that you should not see that. Or is it you who are craven?'

'Ha!' exclaimed the King again.

Sir Gilles's hand slapped the hilt of the dress dagger at his belt and the sound drew a gasp from Ranulf and an awed murmur from the stricken household. Hugh held up the gauntlet.

'I pick up your gage, Sir Gilles.' And he flicked it contemptuously at the champion's surcoat. The big man caught the gauntlet by trapping it at his throat and smiled slowly with grim satisfaction.

'You are a fool, boy,' he growled. 'You will pay dearly for so cheap a jibe. Is your life worth so little?'

Although Ranulf was more then ready for death the thought that his son would die in his stead was more than the baron could bear. It gave him a desperate strength.

'No,' he gasped. 'I beg your Grace! Take my lands, take my goods and chattels, take even the robes I stand in, but spare me my surviving son!'

Hugh rounded on Ranulf, stung by his father's refusal to let him avenge the family name.

'Father, do not dishonour me!'

The father made to take his son into his arms but the youth held back, unable to forgive the slight to his honour.

'My son!' pleaded Ranulf.

‘My good Lord,’ called Isabella. Ranulf turned from his son to his wife. She looked at him in mute appeal to accept their fate with dignity. Ranulf’s pride, his joy in her nobility refused to accept the inevitability of its surrender to this new-born tyrant. He relaxed his aching knees in attempted supplication but, before he could kneel, Hugh linked their arms and brought his father firmly to his feet.

‘Enough!’ cried the King. ‘We shall see, my Lord. if your fealty is as slender as your fortune.’ His glittering eyes, manic with power, swept the hypnotised assembly.

‘Your son shall meet our champion on the morrow and justice will be seen to be done. For the rest, the day wearies us and we shall retire to dream sweet dreams. We bid you goodnight.’

The company of knights and ladies undulated before the King as he crossed the Great Hall and mounted into the maw of the wide staircase followed by Sir Gilles and the French entourage. Retainers hurried forward to light the way and tend to the royal needs.

As the Gallic jokes, provoking spiteful laughter, drifted away up the stairs the members of Ranulf’s household glanced anxiously towards their Lord, seeking the sign that would release them from their embarrassment. Isabella moved to her husband’s side and whispered, ‘Thou art still master here, my Lord.’

Ranulf seemed to come awake as if from a nightmare.

He looked at his wife for a long moment before his mind focussed. and then he tightly smiled his gratitude. He steadied himself on the back of his chair and raised a hand, fighting to keep it from trembling. ‘God give you all good night,’ he said with deliberate calm.

The company murmured in respectful response and began gratefully and circumspectly to withdraw. Soon none but the retainers remained and these were dismissed like shadows by a wave of Isabella’s hand.

‘Wilt thou come to bed, my Lord?’ she asked gently.

Ranulf nodded and looked at his son. Hugh avoided his eyes and turned to slop more wine into his goblet. Hurt clouded the older man’s eyes. He took a step towards his son and then turned back to his wife. Isabella inclined her head encouragingly and Ranulf moved to the boy and took his arm.

‘It was not in my mind to dishonour you, my son,’ he said simply. ‘You played the man and I took great pride in it. But you must know how dear you are to my heart and to your mother. This Gilles Estram is an evil man. I know it. I have heard it told there is no finer champion in all France.’

Hugh looked up at the unhappy man. ‘There is no dishonour in death, Father,’ he said, ‘only in the manner of dying. And as to evil, if I shall die tomorrow it is the the King who kills me.’

‘No, do not say so! The King is not himself. He is bewitched!’

‘Come, my Lord, to bed,’ said Isabella, steering her husband into the deepening shadows. ‘Thou art not will and Hugh will need his rest.’ She looked pointedly at the goblet in her son’s hand. ‘Come to our chamber and bid us goodnight,’ she said. Hugh drained the goblet and set it down. ‘Yes, Mother,’ he said.

He watched his parents fade into the dark of the stairs and then moved into the warm light of the fire. He stared into the shifting patterns of the muttering embers. Oh, would that they could speak to him to tell him of his fate!

He’d been a man for so little time. He’d earned his spurs to take to the Holy Land and fight in the Crusade, not to become the easy victim of a swaggering Frenchman.

Should he die on the morrow the fire would live on. Soon one of the kitchen knaves would be roughly shaken from sleep to feed these flames. They would snatch at and catch the newly-stacked logs, taking fresh life in new shapes and new voices. Would they, could they, sing of his exploits on the morrow?

2

The Demons

The sun as yet was too low to dispel the thick mist that eddied from the river to embrace the castle protectively, hiding from it the lists set up in the long meadow where the last of the Fitzwilliam line was to be slain.

The damp ate into Ranulf's bones and he wished now that he'd ordered the brazier to heat the pavilion instead of assuming that this travesty of a contest could not last long enough for anyone to feel the March cold. He'd been cold all night in spite of Isabella's efforts to warm him. Neither had slept, but then neither had confessed their torment, both wishing to spare the other.

All through the tortured hours Ranulf's thoughts had forever turned to Geoffrey: Sir Geoffrey de Lacey, his cousin, who had but a week since been summoned to London by the King to take the Crusader's oath. Where was he? What could have happened to him? The King had denied all knowledge of him, so he couldn't have reached London. But then it was unthinkable that he should have been ambushed on the way, fallen victim of the footpads infesting the western approaches to the City. If Geoffrey could but now return it might not be too late to intervene on behalf of the family and take on the King's Champion in this matter of honour.

Isabella turned from her unhappy husband to look anxiously at her young son preparing to mount. Although her heart was ready to break she would betray nothing of her feelings to this tyrant, this monster who had come among them to take everything, to take her whole reason for living. She signed to a retainer who brought another bearskin. Ranulf gathered it about his shoulders and sighed, 'I thank thee, wife, but my blood, methinks, will freeze even in Hell.'

'Then that should give thee some comfort, my Lord, as thou watchest another burn,' said Isabella, turning to look at the King.

Ranulf pursed his lips, refusing to be drawn into further protestations on behalf of the man who had already murdered their son in his heart.

The King had risen early, eager for the promised divertissement, but now seemed to take perverse joy in delaying the tourney by sending for endless refreshment to join the heavy breakfast he'd taken but an hour earlier.

And yet Ranulf could find it in his heart to be grateful.

Any delay gave his son longer life and while there was life there was hope that the King would recover from his distemper and renew their friendship.

A blast on a trumpet signalled that the contestants were, at last, accoutred and ready and that the Herald would cause the tourney to commence if it so pleased the King.

But the King was in no hurry to finish his flagon of mulled ale, He shrank into the ermine collar of his cloak and continued to boast of his retaking of Aquitaine. Ranulf watched one of the French knights roll his eyes as he listened, for the fourth time, to how John had taken the port of Nantes.

At the sound of the trumpet, men-at-arms had begun clearing the serfs from the lists and inspecting the moat fence that would separate the horsemen. At either end of the lists the two combatants had emerged from their tents attended by squire and page to join the grooms who had care of their battle steeds near the lance racks.

Hugh looked away from the pavilion and around the misty, tree-ringed meadow that had been transformed into an arena for this chivalrous clash of arms. He had prayed through the night that God would give him the strength and skill to defeat this supercilious Frenchman and so free his father from the rapacious King. He held his legs wide and his hands high as the ropes under his arms lifted him high above his horse. The ropes passed through the hooks in the frame above his head to settle him into the saddle. Although nearly a hundred years were to pass before full-plated armour became fashionable, the chainmail hauberk was heavy enough to make mourning a horse impossible without assistance. This steel, thigh-length shirt and the hosen held up by leather thongs attached to the belt were efficient protection from weapons that sang in the air but, once tumbled from his horse, the knight must thereafter do battle on his feet. *If* he could find his feet.

The man who called himself Sir Gilles Estram smiled secretly. He had set the scene well. A few more such displays up and down the country and his mission would be well on its way to completion. John of England would be reviled throughout his kingdom, hated even by the very barons now demonstrating loyalty to him like this pathetic, ailing, romantic Ranulf Fitzwilliam. He settled himself into the saddle, gathered the reins and looked towards the pavilion. The King finished his ale and flapped a hand at the knot of knights that bound him to Iris boasting.

'Enough.' he cried. 'Let us see if either of these noble knights can match the prowess of the King of England,'

and he waved his hand at the Herald, who struggled to control his restless mount near the front of the royal pavilion.

The trumpet sounded again and the contestants edged their horses to the lance racks. Both knights adjusted their gorgets and the flat-topped mail coif that was to receive the helmet - a hideous, featureless affair with the sight - the narrow slit at eye level - being the only indication that the head it protected resembled that of a man. Both knights took from their squires a long, flat-topped shield and a battle lance. Now fully accoutred for combat, they eased their heavy, working mounts, similarly hung in protective mail, to either end of the moat fence that bisected the lists.

The King looked round at his host. 'It seems this morning air likes you not, my Lord,' he said with open malice. 'Will you not join me in this excellent mulled ale?'

Ramtlf summoned all his strength to still his ague. 'I thank your Grace, but it likes me as little at this hour.'

'What an evil thing is age,' reflected the King. 'It is given to the fortunate few to die in battle.'

Isabella turned her head away and bit her lip. Ranulf's hand closed on hers and she felt the spasms that racked the length of her husband's body.

The King laughed and raised his hand and the Herald lifted his baton in response. The trumpet sounded a third time to call to all that the joust was about to begin. The royal hand flipped and the baton plunged. Both lances lowered like majestically falling trees and the armour-laden mounts were goaded by the driven spurs into laboured action.

Ranulf's pain-racked hand tightened on Isabella's as both horses thudded towards each other in the expectant hush of the onlookers. Isabella closed her eyes. Hugh lifted the point of his lance. He would aim high at the other's helm. It was contrary to all he had been taught but such a tactic had the advantage of the

unexpected, the element of surprise, and was the only chance he had against this experienced Frenchman.

As the horses pounded into the diminishing distance between them Sir Gilles noted the angle of his adversary's lance through narrowed eyes. The young fool was going through too high, shortening the length, the teach of his lance. This was going to be simpler than he thought. The young fool would take the full force of the impact on his shield and the elevation of his lance would unbalance him.

Vapour pumped noisily from the horses' nostrils as they strained under the goading spurs. Isabella felt her husband's hand close like a relentless vice on hers but she was oblivious to the pain, taking it as a signal that the life of her son was about to end.

Hugh saw Sir Gilles's lance dip and something, probably a reflex conditioned in his early instruction, made him lower his lance also. Sir Gilles saw the movement at the last moment before impact and swayed evasively. He took the point of Hugh's lance on his shield while his own lance arced by the boy harmlessly. The blow unsettled him in the saddle causing him to continue the run with an ungainly, undignified roll in an effort to recover balance.

Sir Gilles's discomforture was compounded by a surprised gasp from the onlookers followed by a roar of applause. The croak of delight squeezed from her husband made Isabella open her eyes. She saw Hugh turn his horse at the other end of the jousting run and blinked incredulously. A great surge of relief passed through her, followed by a tremendous glow of pride. Then hope came coursing swiftly. Could it be that Hugh would survive?

Gould it be that her son, so very young and vulnerable, might even prevail against this evil man? She looked at Ranulf to see him smiling fixedly at their son, he too buoyed up with hope. He returned her look and let slip a small, gasping chuckle which was heard by the King.

'We see no cause for merriment,' he rasped, and raised his hand.

The Herald's baton dropped for the second time and the lances dipped. Sir Gilles's helm hid a face evil with hatred.

He would not allow his fury to cloud his judgement. The boy was not capable of outwitting him. He was too inexperienced for that. He had had beginner's luck, the fortune that favours the fool, but he would pay for embarrassing the King's Champion. The boy would pay.

This run would take his head off. Let them applaud that!

The warhorses drove forward at the rip of the spurs, heaving their riders towards the centre of the lists. Isabella, her heart pounding, had eyes only for her son and Ranulf had quite forgotten the numbing cold. Hugh had been jolted from dull resignation to an optimism that came near exhaltation. He had unseated the King's Champion! Now, with God's help, he would fell him and restore honour to the name of Fitzwilliam. Five lance-lengths separated him from glory. Then. a strange sound, like the cry of a horse in pain, startled the animal beneath him and Hugh had to find all his skill to remain seated. Sir Gilles's horse also reared alarmingly. The sound continued as a small, blue pavilion took shape like an apparition in the centre of the lists.

A great cry of terror rose from all the spectators save one.

Inside the TARDIS the Doctor, watched by Tegan and Turlough, patted a smooth section of the control console.

'Tired again, old girl?' he asked cheerfully.

‘How often is this thing serviced?’ Turlough wanted to know.

‘Whenever it’s on Gallifrey. That’s if I remember.’

‘If you ask me it’s high time it had a refit.’

The Doctor calmly contemplated Turlough’s disgruntled expression. ‘But I’m not asking you,’ he said equably.

Turlough wasn’t to be deflected so easily. There were times when he resented the Doctor’s complacency and this was one of them. It was all very well meandering through the Universe in this desultory way, making random observations and running into endless trouble. Research, scientific curiosity, should have a pattern, be disciplined, if there was anything to be gained from it. Not that the Doctor would admit he was engaged in research. He always refused to be pinned down. That mercurial mind of his might be brilliant but it would benefit from the occasional submission to a singleness of purpose. But no! Dedication to intellectual discipline, the Doctor was never tired of saying, - could erode intuition and without intuition there could be no genius. A modest soul, the Doctor.

‘After all, *you* get one from time to time.’

The Doctor’s concentration was bent on the time tachograph, manipulating it with busy fingers, and he only half-heard Turlough.

‘Get what from time to time?’

‘A refit.’

The Doctor’s interest was jerked from the tachograph and he turned his full attention on Turlough.

‘A *refit*?’

‘You regenerate, don’t you?’ pointed out Turlough.

‘What a bizarre turn of phrase!’ reflected the Doctor, turning back to the troublesome meter on the console.

‘Oh, where are we now, for pity’s sake?’ moanedTegan.

She’d been doing quite a bit of that lately, thought the Doctor; that old moaning of hers that he thought she’d abandoned. Perhaps she was feeling homesick again, yearning for London Airport. or for the wide open spaces of the Antipodes. Well, she might be lucky. Here they were again!

‘Planet Earth,’ he replied.

‘Oh, no!’ groaned Turlough. ‘Not again!’

Tegan was disposed to ignore this. He could be very selfish, could Turlough. Two could play at that game.

‘Well, that’s some comfort,’ she said. ‘But when?’

‘That’s what I’m trying to find out. It looks like twelve hundred and something. AD, that is. Yes, it’s twelve hundred and fifteen. March the ...’ He broke off and hit the casing of the tachograph encouragingly. ‘March the fourth,’ he went on, adding ruefully, ‘I hope.’

His hand hovered over the scanner control button as if reluctant to tax the console further, and Tegan’s finger darted in impatiently. Onto the monitor flicked the view of the lists that held Wallingford Castle in the background and Sir Gilles on his still restless horse in the foreground.

‘And we’re in England.’

‘How can you tell?’ asked Turlough.

‘By the architecture,’ replied the Doctor. ‘The helmet that knight is wearing ... and the chain mail ... could be French or English, but that is quite definitely an English castle.’

‘Hooray!’ chirruped Tegan salcastically.

‘There’s no need to take that attitude,’ chided the Doctor. ‘I’ll have you know that this is the age of chivalry and we’ve seen precious little of that lately.’

‘You can say that again,’ said Tegan, rather unnecessarily, thought the Doctor. Strange how the North American idioms dominated the speaking of English in her century. Obviously something to do with superiority in the means of mass communication. None of that here,

‘And we’re lucky,’ said the Doctor.

‘In what way?’ queried Turlough.

‘To have met someone already. At this time in England the population wasn’t above two million.’

‘You don’t say!’ responded Tegan. She was at it again.

‘Come on!’ commanded the Doctor, slapping the red knob on the console.

Sir Gilles succeeded at last in quieting his frightened horse. His helmet hid the enigmatic smile on his face as he looked towards the King surrounded by the marvelling onlookers and the quaking men-at-arms. He goaded his mount nearer to the TARDIS as if to seek witness that nothing in Earth or Hell could impugn the courage of the King’s Champion. The King was quick to take his cue. He raised his hands high and called, ‘Our friends! Friends, calm yourselves! There is no cause for alarm. Out champion will quell this apparition.’

The men-at-arms took some courage from this but the group huddled around the King still cowered at this monstrous blue manifestation. Whence came it? *Hell?*

Isabella had flown into Ranulf’s arms as the thing appeared and he continued to murmur comfort to her as through his aching head trundled the thought that this could be an answer to a prayer - for not all his fevered supplications through the night had been directed upwards.

Even Hugh, in like trouble with his frantic mount, could find it in his heart to be envious of Sir Gilles’s great courage as the King’s Champion drove his reluctant horse nearer and nearer to the terrifying blue but that had come out of nowhere.

‘Come, friends!’ yodelled the King. ‘Courage! Courage!’

And. for the benefit of his quaking Gallic bodyguard, he repeated the appeal in French.

More from a sense of duty than from coinage the men-at-arms remaining within the lists, and the combating knights’ retainers, armed themselves with the lances from the racks and ranged themselves in two lines with the blue phantom between them.

Then a door in the blue manifestation opened, causing the horses to rear again and the lancers to scuttle in retreat.

A wave of horror rustled the company in the pavilion and raised more cries of terror as, out of the blue goblin, came three phantasmagorical figures.

Ranulf held his ground, placing himself between his wife and the fiends, as the French knights joined the members of his household backing fearfully to the rear of the pavilion. If these shapes were from Hades he mustn’t blench. To save his son he must pay their price, whatever it might be. They seemed benign enough, standing there

in their strange attire. To be sure they looked as men look; two young men in short gambesons and long pantaloons and a boy in a single tunic showing a shapely leg.

Ranulf looked at the King and marvelled. He had never doubted John's bravery but to see him now smiling in welcome at this visitation from the Underworld was indeed a revelation of divine courage. For all the ill-usage he had received at his hands, Ranulf had to admit that this was truly a King among Kings. And, perforce, he inspired like courage in his champion.

Sir Gilles raised his lance in salute and called, 'My Liege, I have no need of aid from Lucifer!'

The Doctor's penumbral eyebrows expressed a mild disbelief. 'Lucifer? We *have* given them a turn!'

The King was laughing now and waving at the cringing occupants of the pavilion to come forward.

'With the exception of the King it seems,' went on the Doctor. 'That's odd. He can't be less superstitious than the rest of them.'

'That's the King?' bleated Tegan incredulously.

'Without a doubt.'

In spite of the King's demonstrable fearlessness his trembling subjects held back, provoking even more loud amusement from His Majesty. 'Come, you cringing caitiffs!' he roared good-humouredly. 'We tell you there is naught to fear.' He raised a welcoming hand to the Doctor and his companions and called. 'Do our demons come to visit us? Bid them attend us here!'

Dread coursed through Ranulf's veins, pricking his skiti. Were these fiends he'd summoned familiars of the King? Had even the offer of his immortal soul come to naught? Was this not proof that the Angevins were indeed the Devil's Brood?

The Doctor watched the cautious approach of two men-at-arms with a puzzled frown. 'Demons,' he muttered.

'Very odd!'

Tegan said, with a marked satisfaction, 'Makes a pleasant change for you not to take everything in your stride, I must say.'

'Must you?'

'Too right!'

'He even seems delighted to see us. The King welcoming demons?'

'What King?'

'Oh, Tegan! Twelve hundred and fifteen? King John, of course.'

Tegan bit her lip. There he goes again, she thought.

Showing off his encyclopaedic knowledge. What's so special? If you've lived the thick end of eight hundred years it was only to be expected that you'd remember a thing or two. She wouldn't mind betting that she could catch him out on the history of Queensland. In the meantime she'd show him that she wasn't entirely ignorant of English history.

'The one who lost his shirt in the wash?'

'After he'd burnt the cakes?' quipped the Doctor. 'You could put it like that. His particular shirt turned out to be the Crown Jewels. But that's not until next year. And were still three months away from Magna Carta. if my memory serves me right:

'It does,' muttered Tegan to herself. 'What else could you possibly let it do?'

But the Doctor wasn't listening. He was too busy watching the twitching faces of the men-at-arms summoned by the King to escort them to the jousting pavilion. They had stopped short of the trio from the TARDIS by some three yards and it was painfully apparent that they had no stomach to come any nearer.

'Let's help the poor devils out,' said the Doctor magnanimously, smiling as the men-at-arms flinched at the awesome word. 'Come on, you two!'

The men-at-arms moved quickly from their path as the Doctor and his companions approached the King.

Ranulf and Isabella had regained some measure of their composure as the Doctor drew closer but the members of the baron's household and the French knights attending the King, who had begun cautiously to redeem their pusillanimous retreat, blenched again as the time and space travellers drew near.

Hugh and Sir Gilles. who had drawn closer together, watched from the centre of the lists as the three creatures from the blue but stopped in front of King John. Their aspect was not fearsome, thought Hugh, and they bore no arms. But then demons would have no need of arms. Their weapons were fashioned from the elements; from the air, from water and from fire. He remembered his pondering the night before as he looked into the fire in the Great Hall. Had his deep thought communed with the Nether Regions? Had *he* summoned these demons? If so, why were they known to the King? Hugh looked at Sir Gilles but there was nothing to be read front what could be seen of the eyes through the sight in his adversary's helmet, The Doctor had stopped respectfully within a few feet of the King, who now reduced the gap between them to touching distance by coming forward fearlessly to greet his guests.

'Welcome, our demons!' he smiled warmly. His glittering eyes held on Tegan, seeing her in a new light.

'Name yourselves! One of you, we now see, is in female form. Can this be Lilith?'

The Doctor smiled, making a mental note that he would use that name when next Tegan became obstreperous. 'No, your Majesty. This is Tegan.'

'Tegan? Ha!'

'And this is Turlough. I am the Doctor. And I'm very sorry if it disappoints you but we're not demons. Though, come to think of it. I have been called a demon bowler.'

King John thought about this. The reference puzzled him but he decided not to pursue the matter. It pleased him still to see the abject fear on the faces of those about him. Such mystical discourse could remain unexplained and better serve his real purpose.

'You are too modest, Lord Doctor,' he said. 'Come!

Rejoice with us in a trial by combat. Your arrival is timely.'

He turned steely eyes on the members of the Fitzwilliam household lurking in craven groups in the shadow of the pavilion. Ranulf, still with his arms about his wife, returned the royal gaze defiantly.

'Come, Lord Ranulf,' continued the King. 'Make way for our demons! Let them be seated by us!'

The Doctor and his companions took the seats indicated by the King's elaborate gesture without knowing they were displacing the Lord and Lady of the castle. As the audience in the pavilion reluctantly resettled, Ranulf and Isabella retired some way from the King and his demons, feeling relief far more than humiliation.

The Doctor beamed with pleasure upon Tegan and Turlough as he settled comfortably next to the King. All very well for you, thought Tegan as she exchanged a resigned glance with Turlough. You're in your element, as usual, but I don't like this lot, *and* I don't like the atmosphere, and I'm as cold as charity!

The King raised his hand and the Herald who, during the last three minutes had seriously considered headlong flight at least thirty times, signalled for the sounding of the first trumpet. As the blast reverbetated in the mist the combatants returned to their respective stations attended by their squires and pages, and the grooms moved placatingly among the horses. The men-at-arms had already replaced the lances in the racks and retired from the green arena. Both Hugh and Sir Gilles. after a brief checking by their squires, individually indicated their readiness to resume the contest.

At the flip of King John's hand the Herald's baton descended and the knights' horses broke into their cumbersome trot and were spurred on to the heavy gallop that threw up clumps of wet turf cut by the plunging hooves. Ranulf's arms tightened about Isabella and she again closed her eyes, all hope gone now that Hell had lent its infernal support to one of its Earthly Princes.

Hugh. encouraged by his earlier success, eased his hand in the chain bag-mitten and gripped the lance to lower its point. At the same time Sir Gilles lifted his point and rose forward in his stirrups. Before Hugh could adjust to the move his adversary's lance scuffed the top of his shield and took the side of his helmet. Hugh was jolted high out of the saddle to fall sickeningly to earth in front of the pavilion.

The gasp torn from the crowd forced open Isabella's eyes and then, with a cry, she hid her agony in her husband's shoulder. The Doctor heard this and turned, as did Tegan and Turlough. Then they were turned back to the King by his hideous chuckle of triumph. Tegan shuddered, and it was not from cold.

Sir Gilles had completed his run and turned at the end of the lists and was now cantering towards the pavilion, converging with his squire.

'Is he dead?' whispered the shaking Tegan.

'Not yet, our Tegan,' growled the King gloatingly.

'Observe!'

Hugh's helmet had been plucked from his head before the fall. He was now striving to lift his head clear of the gorges, the collar of the heavy mail hauberk that held him to the ground. He saw his enemy hurl away his lance and swing from the saddle. The squire took charge of the horse and, at the same time, handed Sir Gilles a heavy broadsword. The King's Champion moved on his fallen opponent with slow deliberation.

In spite of herself a muffled moan broke from Isabella.

'Oh, Ranulf!'

The Doctor took his eyes from Sir Gilles's implacable pacing and looked compassionately on the suffering parents. There was an audible tension as the King's Champion came to a halt and turned to his sovereign for permission to consummate the victory. The King nodded and Sir Gilles raised the heavy sword in a manner calculated to draw the maximum dramatic affect. At another whimper from the agonised mother, the Doctor acted.

'Your Majesty,' he came in quickly, 'if I may make so bold?'

The King was startled by the interruption. It broke his extreme concentration on the beauty of the death-dealing blow.

'Hold!' he roared.

Sir Gilles stood, arrested, his sword held high above his head, and the King rounded on the Doctor.

'Lord Doctor?'

'If this is a trial by combat, your Majesty,' began the Doctor loudly enough for all to hear, 'there is clearly a victor and a vanquished. Must blood be shed?'

A murmur of approval came from the people in the pavilion in support of the appeal, but Tegan was determined to go further, King or no King. 'Shame to spoil everything,' she said bluntly.

Ranulf looked quickly at his King, and Isabella lifted her head from her husband's shoulder at the sudden onset of renewed hope. Beneath the raised sword Hugh had made his peace with God and waited with agonised suspense for the weapon to fall.

'Come! Despatch!' he cried.

The King was deep in thought and appeared not to hear.

His glittering eyes were fixed upon Tegan. She was painfully embarrassed at the intensity of the royal stare and wriggled uncomfortably as she mumbled, 'Wouldn't it? Be a shame?'

'Shame,' echoed the King. 'Of course! Shame! Very great shame!' He laughed loudly. 'We take your counsel, our demons.' He lifted his voice above the delighted babbling about him to call, 'Spare him!'

Hugh couldn't believe his eats. He lay uncomprehending until the significance of his dreadful situation smote him with more savagery than could any sword.

'Nay!' he cried bitterly. ' *Nay!* '

3

The King Takes A Hostage

'How long are you to be with us, Doctor?'

'I never really know, your Majesty,' replied the Doctor.

He looked long at Ranulf, who was directing the Herald in charge of dismantling the lists. His intuition supported his observation that the man was in great trouble and it didn't need a lot of thought to divine whence that trouble came.

Ranulf Fitzwilliam was in need of help and, since he liked the man, the Doctor was going to stay just as long as it took to give it him.

'Why should that be?' asked the King.

'I'm usually on flying visits.'

'Of course! To be sure. You fly also. That will indeed be a spectacular diversion!'

Tegan exchanged a glance with Turlough. Too right, she thought. A flying doctor! That's all they needed!

'Fly for us now, our demons! Fly round the castle and back!'

See what I mean, thought Tegan. Was King John one of those characters who chopped heads off as a sign of majestic displeasure? Was he easily disappointed, she wondered.

'I crave your Majesty's pardon,' said the Doctor. 'We've travelled a long way today. I fear the display would be a poor one, not fit for the eyes of the mighty King John.'

The King appeared mollified, much to Tegan's relief.

She shivered. Although the sun was higher now and much of the river mist had melted she was still desperately cold.

She'd not yet fully recovered from the shock of seeing how close the young Fitzwilliam had come to sudden death, or his very real horror that he had been spared. When they'd been introduced all he could do was to blush a rather nasty shade of puce and mumble incoherently until his mother, out of patience, had whipped him up to the castle ahead of the morning's spectators. Men! Boys! When they weren't fighting they were fantasising about fighting, seeming to ignore that death was a major fact of life. It was very difficult to understand. The Aborigines back in Australia must have been, in 1215, pretty much the same as they were in the 1980s; primitive and without social graces like chivalry, but *they* killed to eat and not for amusement.

Ranulf had left his Herald and returned to the King in time to hear the Doctor's excuse but not what it was in answer to. Demon though he be, this open-faced young man with the charming manner had interceded with the King to save his son's life. But it wasn't only gratitude that made the old man warm to the stranger. He had found himself liking this Doctor for other reasons: he was demonstrably not influenced by the King's whimsicality, and he looked and sounded honest. Ranulf felt he could trust this young man in spite of his strange clothes and the mysterious circumstances of his sudden arrival. Isabella had felt this too, bidding her husband to make these visitors welcome.

'You and your friends will be in need of rest and refreshment, good Doctor. I would he honoured if you will accept the hospitality of Fitzwilliam Castle.'

'Gladly, my Lord,' returned the Doctor with a polite bow. 'You are very kind.'

Ranulf turned to the King. 'Will it please your Majesty to return to the castle?'

‘We doubt it,’ replied the King. ‘Nothing has pleased us since our arrival here. We are not so easily pleased as our demons.’ And, muttering something in French, he strode off towards the castle, followed by his bodyguard.

‘Well!’ exploded Tegan. ‘Of all the...’

The Doctor silenced her with a warning gesture but Tegan was not to be stayed. She was very cold and very frightened. ‘If it’s all the same to you,’ she said to no one in particular, ‘I want to go in there,’ - she pointed to the TARDIS - ‘and go... somewhere else!’

‘Don’t be so rude!’ said the Doctor sternly.

‘Rude?’ gasped Tegan. ‘ *Rude?* ’ She looked round at Turlough as if seeking his support. ‘What’s good enough for the King of England is good enough for me, thank you very much.’ And with that she marched to the TARDIS

and tried to open the door. She turned with all the dignity she could muster and said starchily, ‘Will you please let me in?’

‘No,’ said the Doctor evenly.

Ranulf looked from one to the other with misgiving.

These were strange beings indeed. A young woman taking such an insolent tone to a man was something altogether new in his experience.

‘Oh!’ gritted Tegan exasperatedly. And again, ‘Oh!’

‘A chamber is being prepared for you even now,’ offered Ranulf soothingly. Tegan suddenly felt ashamed. The old man looked so vulnerable. It was his son, after all, who had been snatched from death. She could feel that he was as frightened as she was, even more probably, and with more cause. He seemed well out of favour with this horrid King.

‘I’m sorry,’ she said feebly. ‘It’s just that I’m very cold.’

‘My bones are at one with yours,’ responded Ranulf warmly. ‘Come! You need wine and victuals. Come!’ He turned to the Doctor and pointed, with some apprehension, at the TARDIS. ‘What of your...

conveyance? Do you wish it to be brought to you?’ He hoped fervently that the Doctor would decline the offer.

He was too much in the Doctor’s debt to offend him with the sight of his men-at-arms shrinking from contact with the blue wagon. His hope was met.

‘It’ll be all right where it is, my Lord.’

Ranulf nodded gratefully and waved them towards the castle, which now looked more inviting in the mid-morning sun.

The Doctor looked back at his ever-faithful TARDIS

with a deep glow of affection. There it stood in the middle of the medieval meadow; standing proudly in spite of its battered lines and its lack-lustre paint; shabby but respectable, bludgeoned but unbowed, threatened but indestructible. His TARDIS... a police box! An English police box circa 1960 in the middle of a meadow owing scutage to King John! The design specification, laid down all those years ago, called for a chameleon-like ability to enable the TARDIS to merge naturally with the landscape into which it materialised. thus rendering it inconspicuous. The Doctor grinned affectionately. She’d made it all right when she first materialised in that foggy London street, She couldn’t have been less conspicuous.

But since then there had been no other environmental metamorphoses. It was as if the TARDIS had identified immediately with a symbol of law and order; a small pocket of succour, of sanctuary in the quest through time and space. And you’re quite

right, old girl, he thought approvingly. He turned and followed the others on their way to the castle.

But the Doctor wasn't the only one to look upon the TARDIS with such keen interest. In a small copse opposite the place where the pavilion had stood lurked a single horseman, the grey of his chainmail indistinguishable from the bark of the late winter trees. Sir Gilles Estram was excessively interested in the Doctor's TARDIS...

Hugh Fitzwilliam watched his father come from the top of the stairs and enter the Great Hall followed by his guests.

He made to leave but his mother caught at his arm.

'Hugh! Please!'

'I'm sorry, Mother, I cannot stay!'

'Please!'

The youth allowed himself to be detained and glowered as his father approached with the weird strangers whose mysterious arrival had brought him such intolerable shame.

'Welcome! You are most welcome,' beamed Isabella cordially.

'Most kind,' responded the Doctor, feeling a little self-conscious and not a little responsible for the muttered lack of enthusiasm from his two companions. He sensed the antagonism from Hugh but, for once, misinterpreted the signs because of his own embarrassment.

'You seem none the worse for wear.'

'Do you address me, sirrah?'

'Hugh!'

'Yes, father?'

'This gentleman and his friends are our guests.'

'I do not understand his words, Father.'

Ranulf and Isabella exchanged unhappy looks. Their son was alive at a cost to his pride that they couldn't meet but gratitude and courtesy had also to be met and they too had difficulty in understanding the Doctor's words.

'I'm glad to see you're not hurt,' said the Doctor helpfully.

'Not hurt,' sneered Hugh. 'I am *dishonoured*.'

'You are alive, my friend,' said the Doctor gently.

'No friend to you!' spat out Hugh and strode across the Great Hall to the stairs.

'Hugh!' cried Ranulf, but Isabella put a hand on his arm and turned to the Doctor.

'Forgive our son, Doctor. He is not himself.'

'That is understandable,' murmured the Doctor. He wanted to ask them the reason for the King's savage bad humour but thought it more courteous to invite their confidence. 'If I can be of any help please don't hesitate to ask.'

'Thank you,' said Ranulf simply. He glanced quickly at his wife. He wanted to respond to the offer of help but until more was known about his visitors any declaration he made must be imprudent. The Doctor had denied they were demons but the King persisted in calling them so. If they were intimate with the King; however, the Doctor would know the reason for the King's distemper since, clearly, they were not the cause of it. But, for the moment, he would bide his time. 'Soon we shall sit at meat,' he said.

'Betimes you may wish to withdraw. Your chambers have been prepared.' He glanced with sympathy at the pinched-looking Tegan. You will be warmer there,' he added.

‘Thank you.’ The Doctor dipped in a courtly little bow.

Too much to expect his companions to emulate him, he thought. Why was it that the very young had such a marked antipathy towards a physical display of good manners? He tried to think of the last time he’d seen anyone in the twentieth century raise his hat.

RanuIf signed to a retainer; one of several attending discreetly in the distance. ‘Conduct our guests to their chambers,’ he commanded. ‘Rest well, my friends!’

The Doctor, followed by Tegan and Turlough, crossed the Great Hall in the wake of the servant and began to climb the large staircase that spiralled to the chambers above. Turlough looked down at the stone steps with their edges bevelled by the passing of countless feet.

‘How old would this place be?’ he asked.

‘I’d put it at about a hundred and fifty years,’ replied the Doctor.

‘How can they live in such cold?’ Tegan wanted to know.

‘And those don’t help,’ added Turlough, pointing to the long slits in the outside wall.

‘Arrow slits,’ explained the Doctor. ‘And in these days the only central heating is in the stomach. A meal can go on for five hours, so you’d better be prepared.’

‘Five hours!’ gasped Tegan. ‘Who can eat for five hours?’

‘Anyone, if they eat slowly enough. People weren’t in much of a hurry in 1215.’

‘I’m so cold,’ complained Tegan. ‘It’s colder inside than out.’

‘Climbing stairs can keep you warm too.’

Turlough stopped to look out of an arrow slit. He didn’t think much of the chances of survival of besiegers at a withering fire from this position.

‘Oh, come on, Turlough,’ groaned Tegan. ‘Perhaps there’ll be a fire.’

‘Don’t wait for me,’ muttered Turlough. He craned further into the deep slit, curious about the terrain and the angle of fire. Suddenly he realised that a blue shape in the distance was the TARDIS and, approaching it, was a solitary horseman.

The servant left the stairs at the second floor and crossed a small antechamber to a solid wood door faced with rough iron braces. This he opened invitingly and the Doctor entered the bed chamber followed by Tegan, who rushed joyfully to the warm blaze in the generous, arched fireplace. The servant withdrew, closing the door on them.

‘Where’s Turlough?’

Tegan was too enraptured by the fierce comfort of the fire to answer directly. Her shuddering was reduced to a satisfied purr as she stretched her hands to the welcoming flames.

‘He’s out there looking through one of those windows.’

She turned her back to the fire, immediately feeling chill air clutch at her hands. The chamber was a lot cosier than the Great Hall beneath: the bleakness of the rough stone walls was softened by hanging pelts and tapestries and the size of the room was diminished by the dominance of the great bed.

‘Just look at the size of that bed! It’s big enough for six!’

‘Another way of keeping warm,’ observed the Doctor drily.

‘You mean when they’re not eating, they’re sleeping?’

‘Not exactly. There’s also fighting and hunting.’

‘So I saw. What do they hunt, if it’s not a rude question?’

Tegan had visions of being chased by chivalrous, steel-clad men on horseback through inclement undergrowth.

The Doctor had picked up one of the several brown pelts on the bed and came to her with it. ‘This, among other things,’ he said and draped it about her shoulders, ‘It’s a bearskin.’

‘It smells!’ Tegan wrinkled her nose.

‘It does a bit,’ agreed the Doctor merrily. ‘But it’s marginally better than being cold. The choice is yours.’

‘If I’ve any sort of choice at all I’d rather not be here.’

‘Have you no curiosity?’ The Doctor wore a hurt expression.

‘On the contrary,’ said Tegan tartly. ‘I’m a mass of curiosity about why people have to live so uncomfortably.

How long are we going to be here?’

But the Doctor’s face now wore a different expression: the faraway look that indicated intense concentration.

‘March the fourth, twelve-fifteen,’ he mused. Tegan was shocked out of her bearskin which fell to the floor at her feet, She had taken the Doctor’s spoken thought to be an answer to her question and, although the Doctor was pondering today’s date, it sounded to her like a life of exile in a frantically cold climate..

‘There’s something wrong here,’ muttered the Doctor.

‘Too right! You roast on one side while you freeze on the other.’ Tegan stooped to pick up the bearskin.

Turlough watched the distant rider turn from the TARDIS, taking his horse to a trot that broke into a gallop.

Withdrawing from the arrow slit, Turlough first bumped his head and then turned and nearly impaled himself on the point of the sword which was being held at his throat.

‘Stand, demon!’ commanded Hugh. Behind the threatening sword was the additional menace of two men-at-arms. Turlough did as he was ordered and stood.

Clutching the bearskin and hugging the fire, Tegan watched the Doctor, hands thrust deep into his pockets, pacing the floor of the bed chamber in the grip of agitated thought and muttering ‘March the fourth, March the fourth’ endlessly. Tegan’s heart sank and she turned herself slowly, like a spit, to spread the warmth of the fire more evenly over her still shivering body. The Doctor was obviously about to take off on another of his jaunts, sparing his companions nothing.

‘Off on another crusade, are we?’

The Doctor stopped dead and spun on Tegan with his arms flung wide.

‘That’s it! That’s it!’ He bore down on Tegan, causing her momentarily to feel she was under attack. ‘You’re brilliant, Tegan! Brilliant!’ The glow that now suffused the girl had nothing to do with the fire nor the bearskin. She basked, amazed, in the warmth of the Doctor’s praise, after first resisting the ready suspicion that he was being sarcastic. His face said otherwise.

‘He takes the oath today. But that was in London.’

‘What was?’ asked Tegan.

‘The oath. The King took the oath to join the Third Crusade. But in London.’

All Tegan felt about this was the abrupt change of temperature from compliment to contemplation.

‘Who says?’

‘The history books.’

‘Perhaps they got that bit wrong?’

The Doctor looked doubtful for a moment. ‘Not that bit.

It’s too well documented.’

Tegan shrugged. ‘Who cares?’

‘I care,’ began the Doctor with some passion. ‘You can’t be in two places at once. Not even I. I care.’

‘Well, all I care about,’ declared Tegan with an equal passion, ‘is getting back to the TARDIS where it’s warm.

No wonder they forced him to sign Magna Carta! I bet there was something in it about underheated housing.’

The Doctor smiled in the infuriatingly superior way that made Tegan so angry. ‘But he wasn’t.’

‘Wasn’t what?’

‘Forced into Magna Carta. He was as much for it as anybody.’

‘Now look, Doctor, I know my history!’

‘Not as well as I do, my girl!’

The sword at Turlough’s throat was sharp and he had no liking for the way the owner jabbed it, quite unnecessarily, whenever he wanted to make a purely verbal point. These medieval English really were rather crude.

‘Well?’ coaxed Hugh, making another point.

‘Look,’ protested Turlough, ‘do I have to remind you that I’m a guest here? I’d like to join my friends.’

‘So you shall. Betimes, I would know who or what you are.’

A sigh escaped Turlough in spite of his striving for all the patience he could muster. ‘I’ve already told you. I’m Turlough.’

‘And what, pray, is that?’

‘It’s my name.’

Hugh Fitzwilliam lowered his sword and stepped back.

‘Very well, you force me to other means.’ He turned to the men-at-arms. ‘Take him!’

Turlough was grabbed without ceremony and trundled down the stairs, protesting noisily and ineffectually. Hugh sheathed his sword and followed nimbly. Coming up hard behind Turlough he caught his prisoner’s throat in the crook of his arm thus silencing the protestations. It was in this manner that the milling quartet drew near to the Great Hall. Hugh signalled caution to the men-at-arms and their progress past the Hall was slowed in order not to draw the attention of whoever should be within. Thus it was that neither Ranulf nor Isabella saw their son bundle one of their guests towards the dungeon below.

Ranulf moved reluctantly from the comfort of the fire in the Great Hall to join his wife.

‘Where is the King?’

‘In his chamber. He called for hot water.’

‘Ah!’ There was a measure of reassurance for Ranulf in this. If the King had called for hot water it meant that in one respect he had not changed. He must still have

this obsession for bathing, for risking his health with so much washing. Could it not be that this very passion was the cause of his distemper? If the skin was scoured so often was it not open to attack from all manner of sickness? One bath in the year was all that cleanliness required, and conservative opinion thought even that excessive.

'And Hugh?'

'He keeps to himself. my Lord. Presently he feels he can never forgive thee.'

'And his mother?'

'Oh, Ranulf, with all my heart! But he is my son. He is as proud as thee.'

Ranulf thought about this. She was right, of course.

Were he in his son's place he would feel the same, behave in exactly the same way. It all came back to the King.

'Thou art in the right, wife. Time heals. Presently my concern is for the King and why he is so changed. What thinkst thou of these beings he calls demons?'

Isabella was disposed to think no further than the fact that the strangers' intervention had saved their son's life.

Her gratitude overrode any judgement beyond that, but it seemed to her that any respecter of life could not be all bad, and were not demons, as denizens of Hell, wholly evil? She also quite liked the Doctor and his companions for all their strange speech and even stranger garb. And she told her husband all this.

Ranulf had to agree, but the manner of their arrival and the King's attitude towards them left him sorely troubled.

The more he thought, the more he inclined to the belief that this Doctor was, somehow, a contributor to the King's change of character. He couldn't help feeling that there was mischief afoot but he remained silent on this, wishing to spare his wife the thought that their son's salvation might have sinister undertones. His intuition was about to be proved sound.

A commotion from the stairwell heralded the entrance of Sir Gilles Estram followed by four French knights.

There was a threat in the way they marched across the Hall in aggressive unison.

'My Lord!' called Sir Gilles.

Ranulf's tone was cool. 'What now?'

'I must ask the Lady Isabella to accompany me.'

Isabella controlled her fear but she stiffened, her head coming up to look with scorn upon the Frenchman.

Ranulf's misgiving manifested itself in anger. To what end?'

'Your Lady is to be held in custody.' Sir Gilles made no attempt to mask his pleasure at the shock his words caused.

His bland smile struck terror in Ranulf's heart and filled Isabella with loathing.

'What!' The word was wrung from Ranulf as fear gave way to incredulity.

Sir Gilles chose his words with relish. 'To be held in custody against your continued good behaviour towards our sovereign Lord, the King.'

Ranulf refused to believe his ears. Could this noxious Frenchman have ideas above his station?

'On whose authority?'

'That of the King.'

This upstart King's Champion had exceeded himself. It was too much to believe that this unprecedented abuse of hospitality could have originated from the King.

'The King is a guest in my home. He would not use me thus.'

‘He would and does, my Lord.’

And still Ranulf found the enormity of this action beyond belief. Whatever else the King might be capable of.

he was not capable of this. He started forward. ‘We shall see.’

With a flourish Sir Gilles drew his sword and stepped into the baron’s path, the four knights closing ranks with a barely perceptible but menacing movement. ‘Be not rash, my Lord! The King is bathing. He sends word to know if preserved peaches and new cider will be provided when he dines.’ He turned to Isabella for confirmation that King John’s favourite food and drink would be forthcoming.

Ranulf’s mouth hung agape at this further grievous insult.

The King’s gastronomic preferences were well known and had been punctiliously catered for since his unexpected arrival. Isabella frowned warningly on her husband before turning proud eyes on Sir Gilles. ‘The King shall lack no comfort while within these walls. Word shall be left.’

‘My Lady!’ Sir Gilles indicated with his sword that Isabella should precede him and she moved to Ranulf to salute him with a valedictory kiss.

Ranulf’s cold eyes kindled at the Frenchman’s offensive smirk. ‘If so much as a hair comes to harm ...’

Sir Gilles cut in smoothly. ‘A matter which rests entirely with you, my Lord.’

Isabella held her husband close for a moment and whispered, ‘Be not provoked! God is with us.’

Ranulf watched his wife borne away from him. The fear he felt for her safety was swiftly replaced by a growing hatred for the man whose every action since his arrival the day before had ranged from the churlish to the tyrannical.

How could any man change so fundamentally in so short time? The question had tormented him for hours, no matter how hard he tried to push it from his mind. Could not a face from Hell wear an agreeable smile? Could not a voice from Hell speak honeyed words? The answer was with the King’s demons.

4

The Iron Maiden

The dungeon's only source of light was from the iron grating set in the floor of the courtyard directly above.

Through this opening, in the old days, foul smelling refuse would accompany the abuse dropped from the bailey onto the victim beneath, but this subterranean prison chamber had long been in disuse. Ranulf Fitzwilliam hadn't inherited certain of his forbears' bizarre tastes, One of which had been the short, sharp and shocking dispensation of summary justice.

Turlough looked about him in alarm. Huge staples in the black, damp walls and ceiling held stalactites of rusting chains. If they were going to leave him here they might as well dig a hole and bury him. As his eyes adjusted to the gloom he saw that there was another person in the dungeon with the younger Fitzwilliam and the two doltish men-at-arms: a figure that held rigidly still, silent, massive and forbidding. Was this, perhaps, the resident executioner put in charge of tormenting the inmates of this fearsome place? If this was to be his fate he'd tell them anything they wanted to know even if he had to invent it. Surely torturers knew that?

'Speak!' commanded Hugh.

'I've been speaking, haven't I? I've nothing to hide. I'll tell you anything you want to know.'

Hugh gave tongue to an oath that was entirely appropriate to the sewer-like environment. 'You speak nothing but nonsense! Are you mad?'

Turlough was beginning to think that to confess to insanity might be a way out of his predicament but remembered in time certain tales he'd heard about the primitive treatment given to the mentally sick.

'No, of course I'm not mad. I've told you who I am and where I come from. What more do you want?'

'Are you the King's man like my father?'

'I'm nobody's man.'

'Then what do you here?'

'I came with the Doctor.'

'What is this Doctor's purpose?'

Turlough thought he could give his imagination free rein on that one but again remembered in time that he would be judged a lunatic with complete justification. 'I don't know,' he said. 'He pleases himself most of the time.'

Hugh grimaced with impatience and held the point of his sword dangerously near to the end of Turlough's nose.

'I'll loosen your tongue.' He sheathed the sword and turned to the silent executioner.

Turlough began to panic. 'Look,' he gabbled, 'there's nothing wrong with my tongue. It's quite loose enough.

Just tell me what you want to know. Ask me a few leading questions like "has the Doctor got two hearts?", or "is it true he's getting on for eight hundred years old?"

Something sensible like that or in ...'

He tailed off. Hugh had cleared the men-at-arms from the front of the executioner, enabling Turlough to see that the figure wasn't that of a man at all, but of an iron effigy of a shapeless woman. Hugh took hold of a projection on the metallic

female and pulled. With an appropriate squeal the front of the effigy swung away on hinges to reveal a gaping, hollow interior.

'Behold!' invited Hugh.

What Turlough beheld made him aghast. The inside of this metal sarcophagus was lined with wicked-looking spikes, every one of which was long enough to spit a rabbit.

They were never going to put him in that!

'Now, listen!' gasped Turlough.

'Yes?' encouraged Hugh,

'Just tell me what to say and I'll say it. You don't have to go to all this trouble.'

'What does the King here?' demanded Hugh.

If only he knew what was in this hot-headed Fool's mind, thought Turlough. He'd be perfectly happy to tell him what he wanted to hear and nobody, so tar as he could see, would be the worse for it. His throat was very dry. He badly needed a drink.

'Let me ask you a question,' he said.

'Speak!' responded Hugh.

'Would it be all right if I just told you how you could find out why the King is here?'

Hugh sensed success at last. Although he was still smarting from the humiliation of his defeat that morning he had no desire to put this savage device to use, the more so since it had no place in Fitzwilliam Castle, being part of the baggage of this flagitious Frenchman fawning on the King.

'How? Tell me!'

'Ask him,' suggested Turlough.

'What!'

'Ask the King! Is there a better way of finding out?'

Hugh was abruptly returned to his fury. 'You dare to trifle with me!' he stormed, and turned to the men-at-arms.

'Fill the Iron Maiden!'

Turlough decided that in resisting such an uncomfortable experience he had absolutely nothing to lose. He leapt back before the advancing men-at-arms, looking frantically for a weapon. Brought up against the dungeon wall his groping hand found a length of dependent chain. At the same time his left foot lashed up at the first to reach him, sending the man down with a groan. Hugh's sword rasped from its scabbard as Turlough brandished the chain to hold the second man-at-arms at bay, In the short pause that followed the tramp of approaching feet arrested further movement in the dungeon. Hugh sensed a different danger and hissed an urgent warning: 'Hold!'

Turlough calculated his chances of making it to the door which still stood open. Whatever the identity of those approaching he guessed he had more to gain than those who constituted his immediate threat. His dash to the door was frustrated by the sudden anomalous entrance of Isabella as she was prodded into the dungeon by Sir Gilles.

'Mother!'

Hugh was frozen in shock long enough for Sir Gilles to take easy control of the situation.

'Seize them!'

Isabella was pushed roughly aside and Turlough found himself facing a fence of swords presented by the French knights. Hugh's weapon was immediately engaged by that of the King's Champion who, with consummate ease, flicked Hugh's sword away as if it were a straw and pinned the youth against the menacing teeth of the gaping Iron Maiden causing Isabella to cry Out in anguish as if the pain was hers.

'Twice in one day,' chuckled Sir Gilles. 'It is most embarrassing.'

Hugh spoke through clenched teeth. 'You had best kill me for, if you do not, I shall most assuredly kill you.'

Isabella could not hold back another cry. Sir Gilles directed malevolent eyes at her, making no attempt to help her rise from the noisome mass of rank straw on which she had fallen. 'Why is youth given to such extravagance?' he murmured with relaxed reflection. 'It appears, my Lady, that you are not to be without companionship.' He turned his attention to Hugh's men-at-arms, one of whom was still recovering from Turlough's desperate kick. 'Do you serve the King or the caitiff Ranulf?' he demanded.

'The two men looked from Sir Gilles to the porcupine display of swords from the advancing Frenchmen and then, miserably, at each other.

'The King,' they mumbled severally, avoiding both Hugh's vengeful eyes and Isabella's painful attempt to regain her dignity.

'Good,' growled the champion with unconcealed triumph. 'Then secure these enemies of the King!'

The reluctant men-at-arms made for Turlough as if by doing so they could avert the wrath of the young

'Leave the demon! He is no enemy of the King.'

The men changed direction with even greater reluctance, preferring the thought of restraining a legion of demons to putting a finger on the glowering son of their lord and master. As manacles snapped about Hugh's wrists Sir Gilles put up his sword and moved to Turlough.

'What is your name, demon?'

Since to deny demonic status would ally him to the enemies of the King and inevitably shackle him to the dank walls of this intolerable dungeon, Turlough decided not to contradict his questioner. His respect for freedom was such that he would gladly extend it to those who wished to believe in demons.

'Turlough.'

'Turlough,' repeated Sir Gilles. playing the two syllables with lips, teeth and tongue. 'A French sounding name.

Have you, perhaps. French connections?'

'Not that I know of,' replied Turlough cautiously, not wishing to surrender any possible advantage as he watched the unresisting Isabella being fettered near her son. 'But it's always possible that there is a cultural influence on my mother's side.' He was gratified to notice what he thought could be a twinkle in the French knight's eyes.

'You have been with the Doctor long.'

It wasn't a question so much as a statement, perceived Turlough. so he left it unanswered. 'Long enough,' went on Sir Gilles, 'to know this demon Doctor well?'

'Well enough.'

'I have great interest in his engine.'

'His what?'

‘His blue engine.’

‘Ah, yes!’ Turlough was about to confess that he’d viewed Sir Gilles’s earlier interest in the TARDIS through the arrow slit but stopped himself in time. Sir Gilles didn’t seem the sort of man who took kindly to being spied upon.

He watched warily as the Frenchman worried his beard with a restless hand,

‘I would examine it.’

‘I wouldn’t if I were you.’ advised Turlough. ‘It could be dangerous.’

‘Are you questioning my courage, demon?’

‘No, no!’ came in Turlough quickly. ‘I was thinking of the Doctor. It could be dangerous for the Doctor. If it were tampered with,’ he added.

‘Ah, yes!’ Sir Gilles agreed readily. ‘No harm must come to the demon Doctor. The King would be most unhappy.

You shall come.’

‘Come where?’

‘With me, demon Turlough, to examine this engine.’

Turlough had to think quickly. The TARDIS was the only way out of this rapidly deteriorating situation, the only way of escape from these medieval madmen. ‘What sort of examination had you in mind?’ he asked with grave respect.

Sir Gilles sauntered to the dungeon wall to make a cursory inspection of his captives’ uncomfortable constraints and remained, with arms akimbo, close to Isabella as he replied.

‘I am curious to see how small a thing can contain three demons. Is it not uncomfortable?’

Turlough could think of no reason for dissembling but, on the other hand. how could he expect the superstitious, untutored inhabitants of Europe’s Middle Ages to comprehend any concept beyond three dimensions? These people thought the Earth was flat!

‘You get used to it,’ he said.

Sir Gilles came back to Turlough and studied him closely for a moment. ‘How is it entered?’ he asked.

Turlough remembered that he’d seen the distant horseman lean from the saddle to try the door of the TARDIS before riding away. ‘You need a key,’ he said.

And then he made a great mistake. ‘The Doctor has it.’

The expression on Tegan’s face was aloof and sceptical.

‘Well, that’s not what I was taught!’ she said vehemently.

She had dragged a chair nearer the fire and sat huddled on it, looking sulkily over the edge of the bearskin at the Doctor as he strode restlessly up and down the length of the bed chamber.

‘I suspect you weren’t taught at all, dear Tegan.’

‘Now, look!’ yelped Tegan angrily.

The Doctor broke the rhythm of his stride and adopted an apologetic tone. ‘I mean merely ... that the history books leave a lot out.’ He hesitated, intimidated for a moment by the sheer size of the subject. ‘I mean, there’s such a lot of it.’

Tegan had been trotting out what memory she had of school involvement with the times of Bad King John of England. holding forth about how the barons had to divert him from his evil ways. How easy it is, thought the Doctor, to give a dog a

bad name. The function of history, surely, was to include the dog's point of view in the record of things, not ignore the bark for fear of the bite. The trouble was, of course, that most people howled before they were bitten. But how to explain this to the rebellious Tegan? He resumed pacing.

'You could be thinking of Shakespeare's King John, of course. But Shakespeare didn't write history. Although sometimes, as in this case, he seems to have invented it.'

Tegan was in no mood for a history lesson. She'd put 1066

and all that behind her long ago, but she wasn't going to let the Doctor get away with a total whitewash of that dreadful galah she'd met that morning.

'Are you saying King John was a good man?'

The Doctor abandoned his pacing, remembering he was on dangerous ground. He came to the fire and lifted his coat tail to warm his bottom. To err, after all, was human but remembering the regal behaviour of this morning the Doctor was finding his divinity a little strained. He compromised.

'Don't take my word for it! You'll be able to judge for yourself ... I hope. But there's little evidence that he was such a bad man.'

Tegan looked at her learned companion its wonderment. 'After this morning!' she said scornfully.

'You've got to be joking!'

'I don't feel under any obligation to make jokes,' the Doctor said testily. 'Facts are facts.' Tegan's feminine superficiality irritated him but it was also a fact, he remembered, that London was at least fifty miles away and no mortal man could be in two places at once. Something was wrong. But what? History, so far as he knew, hadn't recorded an impostor but then the widespread illiteracy of the times precluded a reliable record. And, on reflection, could enough facts ever be recorded to make for reliability at the best of times?

'I know what a fact is,' Tegan was saying scornfully.

'That cruel behaviour this morning was a fact. And,' she waved a dogmatic finger, 'Magna Carta was a fact.'

The Doctor gritted his teeth. By Gallifrey, this girl could be irritating! 'It's also a fact,' he found himself saying sonorously, 'that most of the barons were loyal to him. They respected him as a fine soldier and a considerable statesman. He could have crushed that rebellion as easily as that!'

His eloquent gesture ended in the sharp snapping of finger and thumb and caused Tegan to jerk in reflexive alarm as, for the merest fraction of a second, she thought it was the Doctor's sudden movement that had whipped open the door.

Ranulf stood upon the threshold, sword in hand.

Behind him were other knights of his household and a number of men•at-arms. The barons's eyes were wild.

'What have you demons made of the King?'

'Made of him?' echoed the Doctor, his eyebrows arched in innocence. 'What's the matter with him?'

Ranulf marched further into the chamber and Tegan got quickly to her feet as the brandished sword came dangerously close.

'He is bewitched!' Ranulf glanced over his shoulder at his wary liegemen as if asking for their corroboration of this deplorable fact. 'First he takes my fortune and

now he has made my Lady a hostage.' His voice rose in an indignant appeal. 'How can he question my loyalty? There is none more loyal than I.'

The Doctor took a pace forward, lifting his hands in a conciliatory gesture which was wildly misinterpreted by the baron's entourage who fell back to a rattle of unsheathed weapons. Only Ranulf stood his ground, the point of his sword defying the Doctor to advance further.

'My friends! Please! You have nothing to fear from us,'

the Doctor announced soothingly. 'I repeat, we're not demons, and we've done no harm to the King. Or to anyone for that matter. And we don't intend any.'

'Then why are you here?' demanded Ranulf. His eyes were drawn to the shivering Tegan tucking herself away behind the Doctor. 'She would be warmer in Hades.'

The Doctor allowed himself a smile. How often had he heard Tegan provoked into suggesting that certain of her disputants should take themselves off to that rather warmer area?

'We're not here by design but by accident,' he tried to explain.

'My ...' - he thought desperately for a word to describe the TARDIS that wouldn't burden further the credulity of his listeners - '...conveyance is inclined to be capricious.

We lost our way.'

Ranuif's suspicions were not so easily allayed. 'If you are lost how is it that the King knew you?'

'But he didn't, did he?' pointed out the Doctor. 'If you remember, he asked us our names.'

'He asked you how you were called,' agreed Ranulf. 'But he greeted you as his demons, did he not?'

The Doctor's smile widened as it always did when asked a question to which he had no ready answer. He decided to dip into his knowledge of the period and blind the old man with necromancy.

'Anyone can make a mistake,' he said blandly. 'Even the King.'

'A mistake?'

'Yes. I'm sure he mistook us for some other people.'

'What other people?'

'Some people his mother told him about.'

'His mother?'

'Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine.'

Tegan's eyes and mouth were wide. What was the Doctor trying to pull now? You had to hand it to the man.

Was there any situation he wouldn't try to talk his way out of? She could see the others were as impressed as she was.

'You knew the Queen?' asked Ranulf with a reviving of respect.

'I know a lot about her.' returned the Doctor smoothly.

'You might say I took a keen scholarly interest in her affairs. I understand she was given to telling her youngest son, the present King, about a certain ancestor of King Henry. It appears that an early Count of Anjou had been married to one Melusine who was Satan's daughter.'

Horrified intakes of breath and a hurried muttering of prayers greeted this startling revelation. Many put up their swords or daggers to cross themselves protectively. Tegan covered her mouth with her hand to hide the smile as the Doctor went blithely on. 'The story goes that she never went to church ... quite understandably ... and she might never have been found out if she hadn't been made to go.'

The Doctor looked round at his rapt audience, pausing for effect. Get on with it, thought Tegan. You're overdoing it.

'They took her into the church,' continued the Doctor at last, 'and *pssst!* She flew out of the window and disappeared.'

A concerted cry of awe flurried Ranulf and his followers causing a thrill of satisfaction in the Doctor that he'd hit on the right ploy. He looked at them all in turn, making everyone a personal and respected confidant to his intimate knowledge. 'All a lot of nonsense, of course,' he said devastatingly. 'But who can blame His Majesty for believing what his mother told him? It's my certain conviction that my friends and I resemble in some way companions of this satanic Countess the King was told about.'

Growing confidence had swung the Doctor so much into his stride that the aplomb with which he told the story beguiled even the sceptical Ranulf. His tone spoke renewed esteem.

'Whence come you, Doctor?'

The Doctor had known the question to be inevitable but that had done nothing to prepare him for it.

'From... an outer province.'

'And this strange attire?'

The Doctor suddenly became inspired. He'd fudge the issue by dropping a little hint, hoping that Ranulf would then leave well alone. He looked down at his clothes.

'Ah, this! Well ... *chacun à son goût*.'

Ranulf's eyes shone with sudden enlightenment. These people the King called demons were French and, what was more, intimate with the late Queen Eleanor. His voice was warm again.

'You are from France.' He looked round at his men.

That explains much,' There were nods of agreement all round and Ranulf turned back to the Doctor. 'You are from Limousin in Aquitaine?'

The Doctor shrugged non-committally but, not wishing even to suggest a direct lie, he added, 'Just a little further on from there,'

Tegan immediately felt a general sense of relief but did little to relieve her own sudden oppression. The Doctor's deliberate use of the French phrase had reminded her of her Aunt Vanessa who had always used it. 'Everyone to his own taste,' she would say, ' *chacun à son goût*.' Only the Doctor's pronunciation was better. A great wave of nostalgia and homesickness overcame Tegan and took her back to the beginning of her association with the Doctor; to the time when her aunt, innocently in the way of the Doctor's greatest enemy, the Master, had been reduced to the size of a child's doll by that megalomaniacal monster's Compresser - a fiendish rod that, in an instant, could reduce the molecular structure of matter. Poor Aunt Vanessa! If only the Doctor could take her back to London Airport and to the time before the Master had appeared to commit that unspeakable crime.

The Doctor held out his hand. 'Please believe we are friends.'

It was what Ranulf wanted to believe and, indeed, had believed from the time of the Doctor's intervention that had saved his son's life. And if this man had been friend to Eleanor, the mother of two Plantagenet kings, how was it possible for him to have evil intentions towards the reigning King of England? Ranulf sheathed his sword and took the Doctor's hand in his, ignoring the sudden pain the Doctor's squeeze brought to his arthritic joints.

'With all my heart,' he said.

'Good!' cried the Doctor enthusiastically. 'Now, if you are in trouble I'd like to offer my help.'

Here we go again, thought Tegan, and there's no stopping him. She thought of the cosy, bustling cocoon of Terminal Three at London Airport and shivered. Ranulf noticed this. He turned to the members of his household ranged behind him. 'Leave us!' he ordered. 'And fetch warm vestments!' As his retinue filtered from the chamber he turned back to his guests. 'You were three.'

'We seem to have lost Turlough,' said the Doctor unconcernedly. 'I imagine your castle is an easy place for the curious to get lost in.'

'He will come to no harm,' assured Ranulf.

The Doctor nodded his thanks and smiled disarmingly.

'Talking of curiosity may I ask how long the King has been here?'

'Since yesterday. He came to demand again the gold I gladly gave him but six months since. He is not himself, my friend. He is not as I have known him for many years.

It saddens me that he is so afflicted.'

'You think he is ill?'

'His illness cannot be of the body. He rode from London yesterday and then to a stag hunt to bring down the only kill.'

The Doctor's brow puckered in thought. Tegan recognised the signs and decided there was nothing for it but to compose herself in patience. She curled up again in the chair by the fire and watched the Doctor resume his restless pacing.

'This Gilles Estrarn?' mused the Doctor.

'I like not the man!' Ranulf was emphatic.

'Can't say I care for him much myself,' agreed the Doctor readily. 'Could Sir Gilles be bringing some influence to bear on the King?'

'The King is influenced by none. The King I know is resolute and firm of purpose.'

The Doctor had seldom heard pig-headedness defined so accurately but he let. the thought pass without comment. Instead he asked, 'When does he return to London?'

Ranulf shrugged unhappily. 'I know not. And no word from the city. My cousin was summoned there by the King a week since and is not returned. Why? And why no word concerning him from the King? He knows my kinsman as well as I.'

The Doctor's pacing ceased abruptly. Here was a possible link between Wallingford Castle and the city of London: a human link that could hold a torch to the murk surrounding the question of King John's historical commitment in the city on this very day.

'Your cousin was summoned to London?'

'Aye, to take the crusader's oath.'

The Doctor's eyes took on that faraway look which Tegan recognised with an inward groan. She saw his lips move in an inaudible mutter and so did Ranulf.

'What say you, my Lord Doctor?'

The Doctor was too preoccupied to answer but Tegan knew very well what the mutter was all about. It had to be

'March the fourth.'

With barely suppressed excitement the Doctor turned searching eyes on Ranulf. 'What if your guest is not the King?'

'Not the King? Then who?'

'An impostor.'

The baron looked bewildered. 'But I have known and served my sovereign Lord for many years. No impostor could be so like.'

The Doctor was smug. He knew he had the answer even though the answer needed explanation. 'There are more things in Heaven and Earth ...' he began, before thinking better of it. 'If you had lived as long as I have, little would surprise you.'

Tegan watched with inner amusement the startled expression on the older man's face.

'Lived as long as you? You jest, my young friend.'

The Doctor mentally kicked himself for so stupid a mistake. He had forgotten that his real age was never reflected in his regenerations. 'A figure of speech, my Lord Ranulf,' he said airily. 'Merely a figure of speech. But we must be vigilant. Things are not as they seem here.'

Ranulf recoiled a little at this, reverting momentarily to his earlier apprehension. 'You *are* a sorcerer!'

The Doctor subjected himself to another mental kicking

- a harder one this time! 'No! But I ask you to trust me.

Please!'

To Tegan, the anguish in the Doctor's voice was so uncharacteristic that she felt impelled to help him out. She turned steady eyes on the discomforted baron. 'You can trust him,' she said with conviction.

The Doctor had, in his total absorption with the matter in hand, completely forgotten Tegan's existence. The stunned expression on his face softened to one of gratitude as he looked at her, causing Tegan to rethink her enthusiasm. If only he'd trust in a little consultation before dashing off to meet every new trouble head on. 'In almost anything,' she added.

The Doctor met this chastening reservation with the significant lifting of an eyebrow; something else about Miss Tegan Jovanka he wouldn't easily forget. But Ranulf was clearly impressed by the undeniable authority in her voice. He looked from one to the other of these strangers who stirred so much anxiety and astonishment in him.

Whatever their powers, he was disposed, at last, to feel that he could count them as allies. He looked at the Doctor.

'I will put my trust in you,' he said simply.

'Thank you.'

Ranulf crossed to the door and turned back. 'You will join my household at meat?'

'We'll be delighted.' responded the Doctor. 'Thank you.'

'When it pleases you.' said the baron, and was gone.

‘Thank you for your support,’ said the Doctor with the subtlest of irony as the door closed behind their host.

‘Don’t give it another thought!’ returned Tegan in like measure. dragging herself with reluctance out of the chair.

‘Now, if it’s not too much to ask. would you mind telling me what the blue blazes is going on?’

The wicked gleam in the Doctor’s eyes confirmed her worst fears.

‘Want to help me find out?’

‘Oh, no!’ moaned Tegan.

Sir Gilles Estram and two of his quartet of ever-attendant French knights reined in their horses to watch the strange procession plodding its way from the long meadow towards the castle. An enigmatic smile lurked on the wide mouth and in the narrowed eyes of the King’s Champion as the battered but impregnable TARDIS strained against the stout chains that bound it to the lurching bullock cart. The opportunistic Frenchman now had firm possession of the Doctor’s blue engine which would be greatly to his advantage in the battle to come.

The great gate to the castle bailey groaned up at the approach of the TARDIS and crossbowrnen came out to add their strength to the lines heaved by the men-at-arms towing the lumbering cart. which protested in every joint at the giant and unexpected weight of the awesome blue engine. Slowly the overburdened wheels ground forward and Sir Gilles coaxed his suspicious mount into the wake of the bizarre cavalcade.

A horse and rider broke, at a gallop, from a fringe of distant trees and raced towards the castle. A shout from the rider turned Sir Gilles’s head and he drew rein, signalling that his minions should do likewise. As the horseman came closer he was recognisable as one of their number with something of great urgency to communicate. The horse stamped to an untidy standstill and the rider panted something in French and pointed to the trees whence he’d come.

‘ *Bon!* ’ responded Sir Gilles with grim satisfaction. He watched the laden cart rumble to a halt within the bailey and ordered the gate lowered.

Tegan was looking with fascination at the pile of cloaks the serving woman had left on the bed. She’d never seen anything like them. Any of them would cost a small fortune in Sydney or London. Not that the materials and ornamentation would he cut and assembled like this by any reputable couturier she knew of, but she couldn’t help thinking that any fashion house that had the temerity to do so would lead the world for breathtaking originality overnight.

‘What you have there,’ observed the Doctor soberly, ‘is an embarrassment of riches.’

‘You can say that again!’ breathed Tegan and the Doctor winced.

‘Take my advice and choose the warmest. That one.’ He pointed to a long cape of bottle-green velvet faced with gold braid, stitched with pearls and lined with ermine.

Tegan picked it up, her face ecstatic. She swept it over her shoulders and snuggled closely into the luxurious fur of the collar.

‘On second thoughts,’ said the Doctor wryly, ‘you’d better not. On present showing if the King ... or whoever ...

sees it he’ll have it off you before you can say scutage.’

‘Sewage?’ repeated a perplexed Tegan.

‘A sort of military tax,’ explained the Doctor.

Tegan turned a pout into a snort of irritation. She pulled the cape more tightly about her and said defiantly,

'He'll have to kill me first!'

'Don't think he won't!'

Tegan growled and stamped both feet in a tattoo of furious frustration.

'Calm down, calm down,' cooed the Doctor, which only increased Tegan's fury.

She glared at the Doctor. 'I know what I think never matters in the least but ...'

'Oh, come now!' interrupted the Doctor. 'I can be

"trusted in almost everything?"'

The mockery in his eyes was without malice or Tegan would have given serious thought to some savage reprisal, but she had no intention of abandoning her statement. '...but we ought to find Turlough, go to the TARDIS and get to Hades out of here!'

'And I think you're absolutely right.'

' *What!* ' gasped Tegan.

'Let's go and find Turlough.'

Tegan was still rocked to her neatly-shod heels. 'I don't believe it!'

'The only trouble is ...' murmured the Doctor, '...which way's Hades?'

Two horsemen picked their practised way along the woodland path that bordered the river. The leader, still erect in the saddle after hours of rough riding, smiled with content at the sight of Wallingford Castle, pleased to be home after such a momentous morning. For Sir Geoffrey de Lacey that day had sworn his oath of allegiance to the Third Crusade in the presence of the King. He turned to look at his squire, already nodding with fatigue, and smiled sympathetically. The lad had followed him well and had proved he had the makings of a man by keeping pace with the carousing that had lasted through the night.

'Come, Simon!' he called. 'Your bed is within reach.

'Twill be more comfort than that animal.'

The squire, lulled into a stupor by the rhythmic undulations of his horse, opened heavy lids and focussed tired eyes on the man ahead. He smiled apologetically, waved in acknowledgement and prodded his mount forward to draw level with his seigneur as they entered a clearing at a bend in the river.

Knight and squire drew rein as they saw their way ahead to be blocked by three horsemen drawn up in a row.

Sir Geoffrey was about to say something in salutation but checked himself when he saw that the men were strangers and not of Fitzwilliam Castle. A disturbance from behind caused him to turn to see two more horsemen approach his rear. He looked enquiringly at his squire to see no recognition of the strangers there. The apparent leader of these intruders on Fitzwilliam land, a man with massive shoulders and a mane of auburn hair, raised a hand.

'Name yourself, Sir Knight!'

'Geoffrey de Lacey, cousin to Ranulf Fitzwilliam. And your name?'

'Gilles Estram, the King's Champion.'

Another look passed between seigneur and squire; one of shared surprise at this weird welcome home.

'Why then are you not with the King?'

Sir Gilles's long lips twisted into a wide smile from which malice had moved all trace of mirth. 'I am.'

The laconic statement was greeted by a jeering laugh from the pomaded Frenchmen flanking the self-styled King's Champion and echoed by the two behind Sir Geoffrey. The English Knight knew then what he'd sensed immediately, that these men were dangerous. He was also hopelessly outnumbered and in desperate need of help from the castle. But who was this false Frenchman? Were there more? Had Ranulf knowledge of them? And why this gross lie about identity?

'You say you are with the King.'

' *Oui*.'

'How can that be since the King is in London?' Again the mocking laugh rang round the clearing and Sir Geoffrey used the sound to cover a muttered order to the squire.

'When I draw, ride for help!'

The laughter died and. Sir Gilles said, 'Nay. The King is here at Wallingford.'

'Borne on eagles' wings?' asked Sit Geoffrey sarcastically. 'I left the King in the Tower five hours since.'

'You lie!' roared the King's Champion.

Sir Geoffrey ripped the sword from his scabbard and his squire scampered away in an attempt to regain the path to the castle, only to be cut from the saddle by one of the Frenchmen before he'd covered ten yards,

'Yield!' cried Sir Gilles.

For answer the Englishman spurred his horse forward to break front the threatened encirclement, since escape was his only chance of survival, but the ring of adversaries tightened with the efficiency of a vice. Sir Geoffrey lay about him with sweeping strokes of his heavy sword that were soon to tire him. As his plight grew worse he expected to feel the bite of a weapon from one of the men at his back. But it never came. He wasn't to know that Sir Gilles had given explicit orders that he be taken alive.

5

Command Performance

‘This is where I saw him last ... looking out of that.’

Tegan was pointing at the arrow slit in the outer wall of the main stairway where Turlough had lagged behind on the way up to the bed chamber. From the Great Hall below came the droning of voices punctuated by the lutes and recorders of the minstrels entertaining the diners. Tegan had taken the Doctor’s advice and discarded her exotic cape for one less likely to attract avaricious attention. She’d suffered enough from the cold.

‘The chances are he’ll be with Ranulf and already eating,’ said the Doctor. ‘Come on! Aren’t you hungry?’

‘I suppose so,’ grumbled Tegan as she followed the Doctor down the stairs. ‘What will they give us to eat?’

‘Meat.’

‘What sort of meat?’

‘All sorts: beef, pork, mutton, venison, hare, rabbit, poultry. Fish, if you’re lucky.’

‘For five hours?’

‘You’ll be warm.’

‘And fat! It’s not civilised!’

They rounded the buttress at the foot of the stairs on the first landing. The Great Hall was thronged. Ranulf had sent word to his tenantry of the royal visit and the more important were now his guests to do homage to the King.

The Hall bustled impressively. Retainers, bearing copious quantities of food and drink, shuffled expertly between the milling jugglers and tumblers, rivalling the dexterity of these entertainers brought in by the baron that very morning from a gypsy encampment near Oxford.

As Tegan pattered behind the Doctor into the Hall, the King was laughing prodigiously at a whispered communication from his French champion. Ranulf sat forlornly at the monarch’s left, the chairs belonging to the members of his family being conspicuously empty. The Doctor’s eyes swiftly picked over the flushed occupants of the Hall. The absence of Isabella was to be expected since she was presumably held incommunicado elsewhere. But what about Hugh? Where was he? Surely not still hiding his shame?

‘Is he here?’ hissed Tegan.

‘Who?’

‘Turlough! Who else?’

‘I can’t see him.’

Tegan began tugging the Doctor’s arm. ‘Then, come on!’

As Tegan strove physically to persuade the Doctor from participation in a five hour feast in favour of an intensive search for the missing Turlough. Sir Gilles turned from the King and saw them. Without taking his attention from the Doctor the King’s Champion said something which immediately turned John’s glittering eyes away from his food.

‘Out demons!’ cried the King joyfully. ‘Welcome!

Come, join us!’

Tegan muttered something under her breath and the Doctor looked at her reprovingly. Together they moved to join the table at Ranulf's left but the King peremptorily waved the baron from his seat to make way for his demons, once again humiliating his host before the full force of his liegemen. The diners, who had fallen silent, resumed their chatter which now took in renewed speculation about the nature and intention of the new arrivals.

Ranulf Fitzwilliam held his head proudly erect as the Doctor took his place at the table but Tegan's anger was further fed by the utter dejection in the old man's eyes. As she sat next to the Doctor she hissed. 'What about Turlough?'

'Stop fussing!' the Doctor hissed back. 'Turlough's perfectly capable of looking after himself.'

Turlough had finally given up trying to make himself comfortable in favour of concentrating his mind away from the cause of his discomfort. He'd found that if he tried hard enough he could forget his wrists were manacled to the wall above his head and that his toes had tenuous contact with the slippery floor. Unfortunately the degree of concentrai ion he had to exert couldn't exclude the sound of constantly dripping water nor the rustling and twittering of the family of rats in their nest of rank straw.

The intolerable complication was that he needed to be silent in order to concentrate and the silence encouraged the rats in an occasional sortie to investigate the dietary possibilities of his tormented toes.

He couldn't even console himself with the thought that he had only himself to blame. True, he'd played into that furry Frenchman's hands by confessing he had no key to the TARDIS but who was it who had, yet again, overindulged the humanitarian hanky-panky that had landed him in this mess? Who? Precisely! He felt another exploratory flurry at his ankle and yelled, 'Get off!'

'What say you?' asked Hugh dolorously.

'Wasn't talking to you ... but to another rat.'

The insult was lost on Hugh Fitzwilliam. He was feeling far too sorry lot himself. Not only had he been defeated in mortal combat and disgraced to the everlasting shame of his family name, he had miscalculated the form and nature of his enemies to the point where he could no longer distinguish friend from foe. If this so-called demon chained next to him was with the King why had the King's Champion made him captive? And why if he'd been spared from death in the lists that morning was he now a prisoner? And why had his mother been made to suffer this extreme ignominy? He turned his head to study Turlough. Clearly this demon, hanging so wretchedly beside him, was of flesh and blood like anyone else. Were not infernal beings capable of magical change of substance?

What fiend would endure such discomfort if he could escape from it? And what of this Doctor? Did not salvation lie there? He swallowed his pride.

'Will not your Doctor come to your aid?'

Turlough was shaken out of a dark reverie by the unexpected voice.

'You talking to me?'

'Aye. What of your Doctor?'

Turlough couldn't help feeling that such an enquiry was a bit of a cheek coming whence it did. A fat lot of help the Doctor would have been with him skewered inside that metal monstrosity over there. This pup had a very short memory.

'I could expect some help front the Doctor if he knew where I was.'

‘Can you not call on Hell?’

‘I could. But then so could you. With a better chance of success, I fancy.’

Once again Hugh was oblivious of the jibe, redirected so bitterly. He couldn’t be expected to identify with this alien life that had come upon the Fitzwilliams so mysteriously and unexpectedly.

A distant door banged open as if in answer to a prayer.

But a prayer to what? To whom? The prisoners avoided looking at one another, all filled with secret hopes or fears as heavy feet stumped nearer. There was a call for the gaoler to open the dungeon door in the name of the King and three hearts sank. Keys jangled tantalisingly and the door crunched open to admit four men-at-arms who ducked into the dungeon, disregarding its three occupants, in order to take stock of the Iron Maiden. Hugh looked at their backs in disbelief and growing fury.

‘Release us!’ he shouted. ‘Release us, do you hear?’

The men ignored Hugh, giving complete attention to the macabre instrument of torture. They patted it, kicked it and twisted it on its base as they discussed in hoarse tones how best to bear it from the dungeon.

‘Look at me!’ screamed Hugh. ‘Release us, you knaves, or I’ll have you quartered, do you hear?’

If they did hear, the transportation of the Iron Maiden was clearly something that had to be given precedence over being torn limb from limb by an eighteen years old youth chained hand and foot to the wall behind them.

‘You misbegotten curs!’

‘Hugh!’ rebuked Isabella gently.

Her son fell silent, almost grateful for the chance to do so now that, in a sense, honour had been satisfied. With much gninting and mutual muttering about direction and intention the men-at-arms manhandled the massive metal troll out of the dungeon and bore it clanking out of earshot, leaving an unbearably oppressive stillness. Even the rats were compelled to quirt discretion in their straw, It was Isabella who shattered the silence in a soft note of horror.

‘What was that ugly thing?’

‘The Frenchthan brought it with him,’ answered Hugh in guilty haste.

‘That does not tell me what it is,’ persisted Isabella.

Get out of that, thought Turlough with vengeful malice as he resolved to make good any deficiences in Hugh’s explanation.

In spite of herself, Tegan was enjoying the generous portion of wild pig to which Ranulf had helped her. It was something she had looked at askance when put on the wood platter in front of her but her hunger had overcome her suspicions and now she had to admit to herself that she’d seldom tasted anything better. Uncertain about how to eat it in the absence of a fork she’d followed the example of other women at the table and thrown fastidiousness after inhibition in setting to enthusiastically, with her fingers.

The minstrels had whipped the tempo of their performance to a merry mood in keeping with the rumbustious antics of Ranulf’s imported mountebanks.

The baron had done his best to throw off his savage depression in a courageous effort to entertain his newfound allies but his thoughts were never away from Isabella and what might he happening to her. He wondered when the Doctor would make some move to end his suffering. but his engaging guest seemed content to gaze about him

benignly and conduct himself with a languid good-humour far removed from any call to action.

The Doctor, of course, was never more active than when seeming to be relaxed and carefree. His smiling eyes seldom strayed long from the tiosturing figure of the King who was indulging his gross appetite with apparent insatiability. Sooner or later, the Doctor knew, there must be a sign, some moment of self-betrayal which would illuminate the mystery surrounding this representation of King John of England. Of all the questions presented by this distorted situation two kept re-entering the Doctor's mind unbidden: why had his arrival been no surprise to the King, and why, in this era of rabid superstition, had the King welcomed demons? He was soon to find the answer.

The minstrels brought a rippling end to their boisterous piece and the tumblers bowed repeatedly, panting and flushed from their exertions, The King struck the table with flamboyant force.

'A lute! Let us have a lute'

At a sign from Ranulf the minstrel nearest the King approached deferentially and handed over his instrument amid general speculation about the reason for the royal request. The King fingered a chord and then began to strum the lute and sing in a harsh, abrasive voice:

'We sing in praise of total war
Against the Saracen we abhor.
To free the tomb of Christ our Lord
We'll put the known world to the sword.'

The bellicose words, mouthed with obvious relish, were much to the taste of the assembly, comprising as it did Ranulf's private army, and at the endof the verse the King was greeted with enthusiastic applause. But Tegan caught a glimpse of het own dismay reflected in the Doctor's eyes as they exchanged uneasy looks. The King launched into a second verse:

'There is no greater glory than
To serve with gold the son of Man.
No riches here on Earth shall see
No scutage in Eternity.'

The singer's sentiment was very plain; give all there is to give to the Crusade and there will be no tax to pay in Heaven or Hell. There was renewed applause as the King struck a final chord. The Doctor joined in, putting his hands together energetically and directing a sly glance at Ranulf to advise him to do the same. But the baron, who had already given everything, had little left but his despair, and he was in no mood to respond.

The Doctor watched the King closely, knowing that the directness of his gaze could be interpreted as appreciation of the royal minstrelsy. The King's eyes were avidly upon his audience. No actor could be more greedy for approval, more eager to measure the impact of his performance. That King John was embarked on a campaign to raise funds for his Crusade was to be expected. But Ranulf had reported that this was the second demand for gold in six months and that smacked less of fund-raising than of extortion. If the King treated all his barons thus his coffers might be replenished but at what cost to his popularity? And if this was not the King, what then?

The Doctor's train of thought was stopped abruptly by Sir Gilles rising from his place with his hands held high for attention.

‘And now, sire, for your further delectation some additional entertainment.’ He clapped his hands and from the stairwell appeared the men.at-arms burdened with the Iron Maiden. As they lurched into the centre of the Great Hall dogs slunk before the ominous load and took their scraps out of sight under the tables, The sudden hush communicated a horror to Tegan she couldn’t account for: a premonition of evil the dogs knew by instinct. ‘What is it?’ she whispered.

A general murmur of recognition and speculation as the Maiden was set down and stood erect accompanied the Doctor’s explanation.

‘It’s something called an Iron Maiden.’

‘What’s it for?’

‘Persuading people to talk. I hope.’

‘You hope?’

‘I’ve a nasty feeling somebody has something else in mind.’

Any further question from Tegan was thwarted by a bray of laughter from the King which subsided into a series of savage chuckles.

‘Bravo, our champion! And who is to delight in her embrace?’

In answer. Sir Gilles clapped his hands a second time and a. shocked silence greeted the entry of Geoffrey de Lacey. bound and held by two own-at-arms. As the prisoner was propelled roughly towards the centre of the hall Ranulf gaped in profound disbelief and rose unsteadily to his feet. Sir Geoffrey’s disbelief was no less profound as he stared in wonder at the King.

‘Cousin?’ called Ranulf. as if to seek confirmation that this was no apparition. but Sir Geoffrey was bereft of words and had eyes only for his own confusion of vision. The King here? It was impossible. Ranulf turned tremblingly to the King.

‘Your Majesty, this is Geoffrey de Lacey, my kinsman, and a loyal knight.’

The Doctor was alert. He found himself looking into Sir Gilles’s unsmiling eyes above a wide-smiling mouth. There was triumph here, and challenge. It was a look he’d seen often before but he couldn’t place where or when.

Suddenly, the King was unimportant. The Doctor knew he was looking at the power behind the throne.

Ranulf went on, ‘You summoned him to London but a week since to take the Crusader’s oath.’

The King turned his glittering eyes upon the stricken baron. ‘So we did. Indeed we did. And he has seen fit to disobey that summons.’

‘Not so!’ Sir Geoffrey had found his voice. ‘I left your Majesty in London this morning. Yon must remember.’

‘Must?’ the King murmured, dangerously.

The perplexed stirring of the guests at the tables, to whom Sir Geoffrey, was well known, was stilled by a roar of rage from the King’s Champion.

‘You lie! The King has been here since yesterday,’

The doubt in Sir Geoffrey’s eyes turned to panic as he looked at his cousin for corroboration, something the old man’s dejected face gave instantly and overwhelmingly. Sir Gilles moved menacingly on the helpless knight.

‘Let the Maiden reward such mendacity.’ He pointed dramatically at the monstrous device. ‘Prepare her!’

Two men-at-arms sprang to obey, swinging the front of the hideous metal casing back on its hinges. The Doctor winced at Tegan’s gasp of shock as the evil steel spikes

were revealed and she saw at once the use to which this obscene instrument was to be put. At another sign from Sir Gilles the pinioned knight was pushed towards the inevitability of an agonising, lingering death.

'Doctor!' squeaked Tegan,

'All right, all right,' muttered the Doctor, Ranulf dropped painfully to his knees. 'Sire! Be merciful, I beg you!'

The King ignored the abject supplication, his glittering eyes fixed snake-like upon the admirable dignity of the man about to suffer multiple impalement at his hands.

'Your Majesty!' The Doctor's voice cut incisively into the heavy, febrile atmosphere, arresting all movement save a general turn in his direction. The King, distracted from what had been promised for his delectation, turned a baleful eye on the intruder,

'What, our demon? You, too, would beg for mercy?'

The Doctor's face was stern. 'Oh, indeed no, sire. In fact, I think such a fate is too merciful for this rapscallion.

Boiling in oil would be a more fitting end.'

Tegan, in the act of helping Ranulf to his feet to relieve him of humiliation now that the Doctor was interceding, thought for a moment that she had misheard the savage suggestion. But then she saw the set expression on the Doctor's face. She stared at him in horror and painful disbelief. Ranulf struggled to his feet and looked on wretchedly at yet another betrayal. The King turned a slow, cruel smile on Sir Gilles who was rewarding the Doctor with amused appreciation. The silence was the heavier for being punctuated by the flames in the fireplace eating into the logs and the dogs beneath the tables devouring their hastily hidden scraps. The King savoured the moment with supreme satisfaction, his glittering eyes lingering on the expectation in the rows of anxious faces.

'It must he a decade, our champion, since we boiled in oil.' he purred at last. He turned cold, bright eyes on the Doctor. 'We accept your counsel, demon.'

The outrage in the Hall was audible. like the sly movement of disturbed bats in a dark, sequestered cave.

The Doctor's voice cut into it with a fine-ground edge.

'I thank your Majesty. But it wasn't my intention to suggest alternative retribution. My interruption was provoked by shock.'

'Shock?'

'I was quite shocked by Sir Gilles's monstrous lack of taste.'

The King's cold eves moved deliberatingly on his champion in pleasurable anticipation of a violent reaction.

It was there in the way the smile slid from Sir Gilles's wide mouth.

'Who dares to question my taste?' the Frenchman said.

The Doctor went on with carefully calculated urbanity.

'In my view it is the worst possible taste even to think of following the King's own quite remarkable performance.'

He paused fractionally to direct his point with the precision of a dart. 'One just can't follow that.'

The Doctor's light tone did nothing to lessen the seriousness of his allegation and the tension in the Hall was released by the murmur of agreement it evoked. Warm

relief flowed into Tegan with her recognition of the Doctor's brilliant diversionary ruse. Her eyes shone with admiration, something the Doctor found a little disturbing since he was already embarrassed by the gratitude glowing from Ranulf who had been quick to grasp at the straw offered by the stratagem.

The King turned an icy smile on his champion, taking perverse pleasure in exposing his gratification at the Doctor's fulsome flattery. It quickly achieved the intended provocation. Sir Gilles wrenched a gauntlet from his belt.

'I am insulted!' He hurled the words with as much force as he hurled the mailed glove. It thumped the Doctor's chest painfully before falling to the table in front of him.

There were some moments of breathlessness in the Hall as the Doctor picked up the gauntlet and weighed it thoughtfully. Then his wrist flicked suddenly and the gauntlet sped back to Sir Gilles to hit him full in the face before he had time to lift a hand in interception. The delighted cry that broke spontaneously from Ranulf's liegemen was rudely checked by Sir Gilles's sword flashing from its scabbard.

Sir Geoffrey de Lacey who, from the moment of his unexpected salvation from the fatal embrace of the Iron Maiden, had watched the scene with a mounting mystification and astonishment, now saw this awesome stranger hold out a hand to his cousin Ranulf, clearly asking for his sword. Whatever else this weirdly attired young man who had saved his life was, he was not a match for the might of the gloating Frenchman who called himself the King's Champion. 'No! Hold!' he cried.

'Be not impatient, Sir Geoffrey!' commanded the King, mockery in his glittering eyes. 'We have not forgotten you.

Your time will come.'

Tegan's dread expressed itself in anger. 'You must be mad!' she whispered at the Doctor.

Ranulf moved closer and matched her tone. 'He is said to be the best swordsman in all France.'

The Doctor, who was fully aware he had acted impulsively and rashly, consoled himself with the thought that there had been no alternative and that he had already proved himself too quick for the complacent Frenchman.

'There can't be more to it.' he said confidently. 'than good round-the-wicket strokeplay. May I?' His hand was still held out in request for a sword. Ranulf drew his sword painfully and reluctantly to the accompianiment of a series of small squeaks from Tegan. The Doctor took fit in hold of it. It was less heavy than he expected and he gave it a practice pass or two as he would when testing the weight of a cricket hat.

'This isn't a game of cricket.' hissed Tegan.

The Doctor was reminded of sinnething and dipped into a trouser pocket to produce his cricket ball which he handed to the frantic Tegan. 'Don't want to be carrying unnecessary weight.' he explained. 'And if I get into trouble you could always try a maiden ovet.'

'You're impossible!' Tegan muttered furiously.

The Doctor dipped into another pocket. 'And you'd better have this.' He put the key of the TARDIS into her wet, trembling hand. 'Just in case of accidents.'

Tegan tried desperately to still her rising panic as the Doctor advanced boldly i n to a hastily cleared space to meet the massive King's Champion. She loved this charming, eccentric, kind, insufferable and comically courageous cosmic cavalier. If only Turlough was here! But what jibe were? What could they do against so many?

This big French brute and the others at the beck and call of the man they called the King of England. There would he no mercy for the Doctor.

As the two swordsmen faced each other and took each other's measure the King threw Op a hand.

'Behold! Our champion and our demon. Have a care, Sir Gilles! Has our demon mortal life to lose?'

'I fear no hell-hound,' growled Sir Gilles.

'Then. set to!'

As the contestants began a slow, crablike circling movement, Tegan began to regret the enthusiasm she had Shown the roast boar. Her stomach churned. She gulped as Sir Gilles feinted at the Doctor's quinte... once ...

twice. But the wily Doctor was not to be drawn, and he watched unblinkingly his opponent's eyes, wondering again where he'd seen their like before. He had decided not to allow his attempts at recall to disturb his concentration when he discovered, to his delight, that his adversary's eyes were signalling intentions. When Sir Gilles's balestra came he was more than ready for it. He parried the thrust at the end of the little jump forward and riposted to the Frenchman's head, very nearly scoring a hit.

The Doctor's stylish response drew a mutter of appreciation from the absorbed onlookers and the clamour eased in Tegan's complaining stomach. The Doctor appeared to know what he was doing.

Next, the King's Champion went into a compound attack with a couple of feints and a savage *fleche*. Again the Doctor saw the move coming and countered appropriately.

Indeed, it was very soon apparent that although Sir Gilles had the obvious advantage of superior strength the Doctor's anticipation and neat footwork more than evened the match. Progressively the audience of warriors became more vociferous in their approval of the bout, forgetting even the King who watched with a thin smile and narrowed eyes.

As the attacks and ripostes and counter-ripostes increased in pace and grew more varied, the King's Champion began noticably to tire and the visibly happier Tegan felt like cheering as she heard Ranulf murmur, 'By Saint Timothy, your friend is a fine swordsman.'

It wasn't long before the Frenchman discarded all semblance of fair play and resorted to a series of vicious tricks that fetched gasps from the onlookers and a variety of countermoves from the Doctor that compelled unqualified admiration. And as the Frenchman's attacks grew slower, more ponderous and totally predictable, so the Doctor's confidence grew to euphoric proportions.

How could anyone not win against this sledge-hammer of a man? The Doctor was even able to select with ease the clumsy move that was to present him with the *coup de grâce*. It was no surprise to anyone when the Doctor performed the *prises de fer* that deprived Sir Gilles of his sword, to the delight of Ranulf's household and, it would appear, to the delight of the King. The Doctor pushed the point of his sword into the Frenchman's beard.

'Bravo, our demon!' bellowed the King.

The crowd in the Hall, swollen during the exciting course of the contest. took the royal cue gratefully and roared their endorsement. Tegan, completely earned away, threw her arms round the astonished Ranulf and kissed him emphatically.

Then the Doctor saw something that made the sword in his hand unbearably heavy and his two hearts race each other. From under his surcoat Sir Gilles took out a familiar short black rod. Recognition came instantly and the Doctor cursed himself for being a slow-wined dolt as, even before he lifted his gaze from the daunting Tissue Compression Eliminator, he knew he would be looking into the mocking eyes of his arch-enemy, the Master.

6

An Old Enemy

The Doctor lowered his sword and lifted his gaze. The eyes he met were those he predicted, now alight with exultation at the Doctor's belated recognition.

The Master. The master of disguise. His arch enemy whom he thought trapped for ever on the planet Xeriphas.

In one slashing mental stroke the whole picture of events came into sharp focus. The power behind the throne, behind an impostor on the throne. But this unholy alliance wasn't directed towards extortion: the Master had no need of gold or other material riches. There had to be a ploy to wreak some quite monstrous evil, the Master's *raison d'être.*

The Doctor hadn't far to look. The signing of Magna Carta had paved the way for the greatest benevolence to be developed by mankind on planet Earth: the rule of democratic government. The fifty years to come, during the reign of Henry III, John's son and successor, would see changes that would establish for ever the basic rights and freedom for all men. What greater wickedness could the Master perpetrate than to deny the world the concept of democracy by blackening the name of the King so thoroughly that he would be toppled from his throne by the incensed barons before the signing of Magna Carta?

The Master's smile became wider as if acknowledging the Doctor's thoughts. Tegan wondered at the smile since it was hardly the smile of the vanquished. And then she, too, saw the Compressor in the Master's hand. Instinct was ahead of her reasoning in recognition of the Doctor's old enemy, for the impenetrability of the disguise was the more masterly by the inspired use of the French accent.

But she saw the Doctor lower his sword and that was confirmation of her worst fears. She looked on aghast as the old adversaries whispered at each other.

' *You!* '

'I'

'Escaped from Xeriphas!'

'With ease. Oh, Doctor,' breathed the Master with a pleasurable sadness. 'you *have* been obtuse!'

'Merely a little slow, I concede your mastery of disguise, but I'm already onto your little game.'

And you can't approve?'

'You know I can't.'

The King appeared fascinated by this incomprehensible exchange, although it caused a certain uneasy fluttering among the other onlookers which was shared by Tegan.

She alone realised that it was the Doctor who was at bay and in dire need of help, but what could she do? She looked about her and her searching eyes suddenly alighted on the Doctor's cricket ball which she'd put down on the table in front of her. She remembered his joke about the maiden over that had irritated her so much. She scooped up the ball and the movement was registered by the Master whose flickering eyes resettled on the Doctor.

'You have always been my greatest stimulation, my deal Doctor, but now you inspire me,' murmured the Master, advancing the Compresser an inch or two. The

implied threat was enough for Tegan. She pitched the ball at the Master with all the skill imparted by the cricket coach at her Brisbane High School. But the Master caught the ball deftly, and with the minimum of movement, when it was but a few inches from his left ear. The catch brought a gasp of surprise and admiration from the spectators and a groan of anguish from Tegan. The Doctor's feelings were understandably mixed as he watched his only chance of rescue frustrated by a piece of brilliant fielding. He even managed a smile at the Master's witty pun. 'Your first slip, dear Doctor.'

The Master moved closer to the Doctor and stretched out both hands, one holding the Compresser and the other the cricket ball. 'Would you care to make a second?' The Doctor was puzzled. He was being offered a very obvious choice and suspected a trick. But what was the nature of the trick? His cricket ball was useless in this situation. On the other hand, quite literally, there was the Master's Compresser with its infinite capacity to reduce any opposition to midget proportions. The Doctor decided on a sophisticated answer to the question. He would go for the obvious since it would not, could not, be expected of him.

With the lithe speed of a striking snake he feinted for the ball and changed the line to snatch the Compresser.

Tegan's delighted skip was immediately registered by the Master who lobbed the cricket ball at her in comic riposte. Tegan took the catch involuntarily arid the Master lifted his empty hands towards the Doctor in a gesture of sublime defencelessness. His voice was mocking. 'And now a third?'

Whatever the Master's motive in deliberately and publicly disarming himself, it defied the Doctor's deepest analysis and his most percipient imagination. All he could do was to watch and to wait for the next move. The Master continued in a murmur for the Doctor's cars only, his eyes on the Compresser.

'That is useless in *your* hand. One, you have moral scruples and, two, to destroy me it would confirm to these people that you are, indeed, come from Hell.'

The Doctor pitched his voice equally low, sensing the need to continue this intercourse on a conspitatorial note until such time as the Master showed his hand. 'As brilliant as ever!'

'Of course.'

The excited expectation raised in Ranulf's liegemen at the Doctor's popular win had been replaced by a mystified curiosity about the unconventional exchanges between victor and vanquished and the restiveness was at last given voice by the King.

'Come! What is this discourse? Consummate the victory!'

The chorus of agreement incited by this was not in the least obsequious; justice demanded an end to the odious King's Champion. The Master, whose posture had remained an expression of total vulnerability in spite of the anomalous smile of superiority, suddenly and unexpectedly cringed. And, as he did so, he whispered, 'Come, kill me!

Thwart my little game!'

Whatever else the Doctor might have expected it certainly wasn't this. The Master inviting death at his hands? There was neither sense nor logic in such a situation, for both of them well knew that the Doctor was morally incapable of killing an unarmed opponent. And in cold blood? The Doctor was baffled. The Master was right; the Compresser was useless in his hands. The good Doctor wasn't to know that the Master had stretched his diabolical cunning to the limit in order to enmesh his

most potent enemy in a net that would harness the Doctor and his two companions to the successful completion of his nefarious enterprise.

Still the Master cringed, bent double in a crouching of limbs like an enormous spider at bay. And then he began to whimper in a grotesque display of abject cowardice that stirred disgust rather than pity in an amazed Tegan and provoked a profound contempt in the simple souls of the watching men whose honourable calling was the bearing of arms. There was a pricking at the back of Tegan's neck as the ugly murmuring took on a bolder voice. The Doctor's bafflement increased as did the King's impatience.

'Kill him!'

The royal command inflamed the liegernen's contempt into a bloodlust that echoed and re-echoed the King's cry and the Doctor had to lift his voice to a shout in order to make himself heard.

'Please! Please! It's sufficient, your Majesty, that your Champion is disarmed.'

'Not for us!' roared back the King. 'In sooth, this is but a puny demon that has no stomach for it. So be it. Let the Maiden embrace the vanquished!'

The great howl in response swept everything before it, beating men-at-arms towards the grovelling Master as on the crest of an enveloping, avenging wave. And there was nothing the Doctor could do to hold it back. As avid hands grabbed at the Master his craven screams built to a sickening crescendo that accompanied the rabid rush to the open belly of the Maiden.

It was more than Tegan could bear. However often she had fantasised scenes of just retribution visited on the monster that had deprived her of her beloved aunt, she couldn't sanction anything as barbaric as this. She rushed to the Doctor and began to pummel him with clenched fists as if to force him to wake them both from an intolerable nightmare. 'Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!' she screamed.

The uproar was terrible but it was still possible to hear the Master's demented choking coming up from his very bowels as he threshed away from the steel bristles already biting into his hack. The Doctor's bafflement was by now of such proportions that he began to doubt his own perceptive powers, even his sanity. If the Master had control of the King he had virtually ordered his own execution and, what's more, that execution was about to he carried out. Unless the Master thought himself immortal and expected to rise from the dead the whole incident had no reason. It came suddenly to the Doctor that insanity could be the answer. Had the Master's unremitting espousal of evil finally toppled him into madness?

The Doctor considered the sword in one hand and the Master's awesome Compresser in the other. They were the only sources of power he had and it was unthinkable that he use either in an attempt to rescue the Master from his unspeakable fate. To send innocent lives to the already glutted sacrificial altar of the Master's wickedness was not only anathema to the Doctor, it was something he was totally incapable of doing. He could endure the Master's excruciating shrieks and Tegan's tortured tattoo no longer.

He lifted the sword in one last desperate appeal to the King and called out above the dreadful din, 'Your Majesty!'

The King's glittering eyes were fixed on the raised sword as if his life was under threat from it. He swept everything within the arc of his extended arm from the table in front of him and cried, 'Hold!'

The baying for bad blood subsided with a slow reluctance leaving audible only the Master's grovelling gratitude which rivalled the whining of the concealed dogs.

'Your Majesty, as the victor I beg you to be merciful.'

'We are not merciful, our demon. But we, in our munificence, will offer you a choice.' The King allowed himself the now familiar lingering look over expectant faces, being in no apparent hurry to communicate the quality of his generosity. At last the glittering eyes moved back to the Doctor.

'The Maiden shall embrace this snivelling wretch or ...' -

and the glittering eyes went roving again until the King flung out an arm and pointed - 'Sir Geoffrey de Lacey.'

A moan of despair moved round the Hall like a sudden draught and all eyes turned to the Doctor. A small sob heaved from the taut Tegan.

'Choose!' snarled the King.

Ranulf eased nearer the Doctor, mute appeal brimming from his eyes. He had been unable to comprehend the Doctor's failure to complete the victory over the repellent Sir Gilles, seeing nothing in the man that could possibly attract clemency, but this hesitation now that his kinsthan's life was at stake was doubly incomprehensible.

'Come,' snapped the King, 'the lady waits ... impatient to lavish her cold favours. Come, our demon!'

The Doctor took his tormented eyes from the pleading baron and looked directly at the pinioned Sir Geoffrey.

The knight met the look with a defiant lift of the head.

The Doctor turned towards the still cringing, croaking Master, marvelling that this always arrogant and contumelious enemy should be reduced so despicably to this display of utterly contemptible cowardice. The choice had to be made. He turned back to Ranulf and returned the baron's sword. The gesture was answer enough and the King pointed an ornate finger at the quivering, gibbering Master who was immediately pounced upon by the men-at-arms and offered again to the monstrous Maiden. The passion of the assembly had been to an extent purged by the pardoning of Sir Geoffrey and, the cruel clamour having diminished somewhat, the Master's dreadful screams were made the more ghastly.

Tegan turned away and choked as the last terrible cry was cut short by the front of the Maiden closing slowly in cushioned silence. There was an instant hush as if the vengeful onlookers expected to hear the moment of the villain's death. The Doctor put. a consoling arm about Tegan in an expression of his own deep disgust at the brutality of the Master's end.

Then suddenly, as a sense of anticlimax began to shift interest from the execution, a shrill, fluctuating, whirring sound renewed interest in the Iron Maiden as it dematerialised in front of a host of astounded eyes. A great cry of terror greeted this supernatural phenomenon and every soul in the Hall fell to its knees, with a rustle of tremulous crossing and the stammering of prayers; all except the King who showed no vestige of surprise, and the Doctor and Tegan who looked at each other in mutual realisation that the Iron Maiden was the Master's reconstituted TARDIS. The Doctor marvelled at the characteristic brilliance and invention of his arch-enemy and, by the same token, marvelled at his own stupidity. He had, indeed, been obtuse.

'The Master,' breathed Tegan in the grip of another terror. 'Did you know?'

'Not before you did,' admitted the Doctor.

The King chuckled sardonically. 'Behold, our demon!

We, too, have tricks!' It was, of course, the Master speaking through King John. The Doctor knew that now. But who was this fellow conspirator engaged in the imposture?

The King's claim and, indeed, his palpable command of the preternatural situation had a calming and reassuring effect on Ranulf and his followers, who looked to him now for royal protection against whatever the Powers of Darkness had yet to send, and the Doctor took note of this with misgiving. He watched the man who played the King beckon his French bodyguard and the knights rose from their knees in obedience to the mute command and moved to surround their royal ward.

'What's going on?' asked Tegan plaintively.

Inside his spacious and well-appointed TARDIS the Master made adjustments to the controls with the deft precision of the informed technician. Gone were the vestments of the early thirteenth-century French knight-at-arms and the mane of auburn hair and massive beard, He had reverted to his tailored knee-length black tunic with the high silver brocaded collar and his handsome features were now framed by short black hair and affirmed by a trim goatee and moustache, His face was alight with satisfaction at the brilliant success of his audacious and imaginative plan as his black gloved hands flitted over the control console. He touched the button of the contrainductor and closed his eyes in intense concentration.

'What's going on?' repeated Tegan.

The Doctor was watching Ranulf cutting his cousin's bonds while calculating what his next move should be now that the Master had so cleverly compromised him. He took Tegan behind a pillar to place them out of sight of the impostor King.

'The Master's using that impostor to bring the real King John into disrepute and he's neatly trapped me into doing his dirty work for him.'

'What dirty work?'

But the Doctor wasn't listening. In trying to plot a course through the intricate minefield of catastrophic possibilities, he was marvelling anew at his adversary's cunning and strategical genius. 'What a mind!' he murmured admiringly.

'What?'

'I said, "what a mind!"'

'Yes, I heard you ... but I'm not any wiser.'

'I was thinking of the Master.'

'I know that,' said a horrified Tegan, 'but you sound as if you admire him.'

'One can't help but admire him.' The Doctor's voice was remote, almost reverent.

'That monster!'

'Ah, yes, my dear girl, but you mustn't allow moral repugnance to blind you to intellect. If you do, you are the more easily outwitted. Just think of what he could do for good if only he weren't totally degenerate!'

'You think!' said Tegan acerbically. 'I'll just go on feeling, if you don't mind. That way I can work up a better hate.'

The Doctor shook his head sepulchrally. 'A great mistake, as you'll learn in time.'

'If I'm given any.' Tegan had no desire to live anywhere near as long as the Doctor, but she wouldn't mind celebrating her twenty-third birthday, thank you very mulch. The way things were going she'd be lucky to get to the end of the week.

‘What are we going to do?’

‘I’m giving it a lot of thought,’ said the Doctor equably.

‘The first thing we’d better do is to move into the line of fire and see what’s next up his sleeve.’

Oblivious that his mixed metaphors had caused his anxious companion to grimace in perplexity, the Doctor took Tegan by the elbow and steered her back into the view of the usurping King John in the certain knowledge that they would, in so doing, be also moving back into the Master’s cognizance, for there had to be telepathic communication between the two conspirators. The Doctor remembered that when the TARDIS had materialised in the lists that morning the Master had been far removed from the figure of King John and that they were never at any time near each other until after the unhappy Hugh had been spared.

‘There is one thing,’ muttered Tegan.

‘What?’

‘You’ve got that.’ She pointed to the Master’s Compresser still in the Doctor’s hand.

‘Not a lot of use to us, I’m afraid.’

‘I saw that,’ said Tegan tartly, ‘but you miss the point.’

‘What point?’

‘That as long as you’ve got it ... it’s no use to him.’

Oh, hoity-toity, thought the Doctor. Hoity-jolly-well-toity!

Meanwhile the newly rescued Sir Geoffrey, surrounded by a knot of Ranulf’s knights, was talking quietly and earnestly to the baron while keeping a vigilant eye on the impostor King in conclave with the French bodyguard. Sir Geoffrey had told of his stay in London and of his audience with the real John in the Tower, and of the ceremony early that morning when he and the King, in the company of many other knights, had taken the oath committing them to the Third Crusade. Ranulf and his liegemen solemnly listened to him in the growing awareness that if they were not in the presence of the King no oath of allegiance prevented them from exacting just retribution for the misery that had been brought to Fitzwilliam Castle. They easily outnumbered the Frenchmen who formed the impostor’s bodyguard. But then, what was the power of this magic that could make things appear and disappear? And what of the welfare of the Lady Isabella?

‘If he is not the King,’ said Ranulf quietly, ‘then who is he?’

‘Or what?’ reminded Sir Geoffrey. ‘There’s the Devil’s work in this.’

The Fitzwilliam faction became alert at movement around the impostor King. The French knights ranged themselves defensively about the royal facsimile who raised an imperious hand to capture attention for the promulgation of his deliberations.

‘Our demon shall be our champion,’ he announced.

‘Here it comes,’ murmured the Doctor.

‘What?’

‘The dirty work.’ The Doctor kept his voice low and spoke rapidly. ‘All you need to know for the moment is that it’s the Master who cast us as demons ... the King’s demons. As soon as he saw the TARDIS he turned it to his advantage. King John’s not very popular with the Church, you see, and the monks have been putting the word about that the King’s in league with the Devil, and that his family...’ He broke off as one of the French knights bore down on them carrying chainmail, a surcoat, belt and sword.

‘You’re never going to dress up in that lot?’ said Tegan disdainfully.

‘Don’t rock the TARDIS!’ muttered the Doctor cryptically. He sighed as he saw Tegan’s face go blank. For a bright girl she was sometimes very slow on the uptake.

Ranulf and Sir Geoffrey watched from a distance as the Doctor was helped to assume the mantle of the King’s Champion.

‘Who is this Doctor?’ asked Sir Geoffrey.

‘I know not. But he comes as a friend. Has he not proved so?’

‘Whence comes he?’

‘Aquitaine.’

Sir Geoffrey pondered. A simple, honest man, he had so many questions to which there were too few answers. He had left the even tenor of life in London and had come home to a nightmare of sudden death and evidence of sorcery, with his cousin caught in some sort of spell and in thrall to a diabolical impersonation of the King. Without a doubt this strange young man known as the Doctor held the answer to many if not all the questions. He had the look of an honest man and had saved his life, but why was he called demon? He turned back to Ranulf. ‘And now he is the impostor’s champion? His demon?’

Ranulf looked at his cousin in bewilderment, knowing what thoughts troubled his mind, for had not they troubled his? How could he answer? ‘He has asked to be trusted,’ he said.

‘Trusted?’

‘Aye.’

‘Can he be trusted?’

‘I am sure of it.’

‘Sure?’

In all the doubts that plagued Ranulf there was one positive statement made by the Doctor that shone like a beacon on a dark headland. He took comfort again from it as he passed it on to his cousin. ‘He knows that man to be an impostor.’

Sir Geoffrey snatched at this unexpected intelligence as if it were a tangible weapon with which to break from this sinister and spectral web.

‘He knows?’

‘He told me himself before you were taken by Gilles Estram. Before you saw him to be an impostor.’

Sir Geoffrey looked quickly at the Doctor, still being fussed into the costume of his new role, and then round at the muster of Ranulf’s knights listening intently to these clandestine exchanges. He spoke decisively. ‘Then we must act, and without delay.’

Ranulf’s taut face tightened further in great alarm.

‘Isabella!’

‘What of her?’

Ranulf’s head jerked towards the impostor King. ‘He has her hostage.’

‘What!’

Sir Geoffrey had been given the answer to one of his disturbing questions: why his cousin appeared so vacillating and indecisive. He looked round again at Ranulf’s liegemen.

‘There are more of us,’ he said doggedly.

‘But what of his sorcery, Geoffrey? I care not for myself

... but for what horror may befall Isabella.’

Ranulf saw, with relief, the resolve on his cousin's face replaced by rapid thought. Sir Geoffrey turned to look directly at the impostor to find the King's glittering eyes fixed firmly on his, The courageous knight felt fear prick at the palms of his hands as he forced himself to sustain his stare at the cold concentration in the ferrous eyes. He turned hack to Ranulf. 'Then I must return to London to warn the King. He will crush this maggot without harm to Isabella.'

(Cocooned within his TARDIS, the Master's face was saturnine with deep concentration. His eyes remained closed but his lips moved in muscular sympathy with ardent thought: ' *Stop Geoffrey de Lacey!* ') The impostor King, still with his eyes fixed on Sir Geoffrey, signed at those of his bodyguard not engaged in fitting a wriggling Doctor into chainmail, and three of the Frenchmen moved across the Hall to take up positions blocking access to the main staircase. Sir Geoffrey broke from Ranulf's embrace, warm with relief and gratitude and, without any acknowledgment of the false King, turned to leave on his rescue expedition to London.

'Sir Geoffrey,' admonished the impostor King, 'surely you do not take your leave so soon? You are but arrived.

Attend us!'

The English knight saw instantly that his way was barred and that any attempt to fight his way out, even with the support of the Fittwilliam liegemen, could only rebound on Ranulf through the unfortunate Isabella.

'Come!' continued the impostor. 'We would know how you can think we can be in two plates at the same time.'

Sir Geoffrey responded to the provocative sally with an ironic bow and Ranulf, in a poorly concealed attempt to head off retaliation, came hurriedly forward to help his kinsman to a goblet of wine.

'And, cousin, thou hast had no refreshment.'

The Doctor, in the process of heraldic transformation, studied the scene and its transparent implications from behind the mask of a relaxed smile.

Turlough, unable to return to the comparative bliss of temporary oblivion because of the rats and Hugh Fitzwilliam's everlasting cursing, was panicking over the possible loss of his fingers. The agonising pins and needles in his hands and forearms had long given way to a paralytic numbness and he searched his memory for what physiology had been included in his comprehensive, albeit galactic, education, Gangrene, he knew, set in when tissue was denied a supply of blood, but he couldn't remember whether or not the actual blood vessels had to be severed.

What caused him a lot of distress was something he'd read about a man cutting off his toes with a penknife, to stop the spread of gangrene that had set in because of frostbite.

He was just beginning to draw a little comfort from the thought that he could increase his blood circulation by getting angry - and that that would be easy enough - when he was startled by a loud whirring and wheezing. like the cry of a large bird in pain. Then the frightful Iron Maiden smudgily appeared on the very spot from which it had been taken earlier.

Isabella and Hugh both cried out in terror, expecting to he devoured whole by some infernal cannibal, before each remembered the noise that had heralded the appearance that morning of the blue engine that had brought. the Doctor. But it wasn't the Doctor who stepped blithely from the depths of the Iron Maiden. It was a darkly

handsome man, dressed tightly in black even to his gloves, and whose intimidating hauteur was deliberately enhanced by a high collar ornamented with silver braid.

Isabella, who had prayed silently ever since her son had admitted threatening a guest with the hideous Iron Maiden. shrank against the wet wall and moaned, 'The saints preserve us!'

From the Doctor's description of him. Turlough recognised the Master with shock and with wonder, closely followed by a sort of relief. His predicament could hardly be worse and this new phenomenon presented something of a diversion from his misery. In short, it gave him something else to think about. But he was going to think about it quietly. There was no need to attract attention.

Hugh's smouldering anger quickly overcame his initial fright. 'Another demon!' he ranted.

The Master's smile was wide and warm. 'Nay, good sir, I am no demon. I come to help you and to save the King from the demon who has bewitched him.'

Turlough's mind, freed from his hypochondria, was busy seeking an explanation for the coincidental arrival of the renegade Time Lord. The Master and the Doctor. The chalk and cheese of the Universe. Here, together, during a period in the middle history of England. Why? The attraction of opposites?

The Master had gone to the door of the dungeon to call through the grille. 'Gaoler!' The authoritative voice fetched a gargantuan yawn from the other side of the door followed by the scraping of wooden legs on an uneven stone floor. A moment later a truculent face, bladder-like in sleep, came into view behind the bars in the door and blenched when nose to nose with the Master.

'Open, good fellow!' commanded the strange face mildly. 'The King is in danger.' The gaoler blinked several times, believing himself to be still asleep and dreaming. He hit the dungeon door hard with the flat of his hand in order to wake himself up and found the action to be unnecessary. He gawped at the Master, wondering how his prisoners could have increased in number without his knowledge, His hesitation stoked Hugh's fury.

'Do as he says.' he roared, 'as you value your life!'

The gaoler jerked into activity and the harsh jangling of keys was music to Isabella's ears. 'Who are you?' she asked with careful respect as the Master turned back from the door.

'I am the Master.'

'And what is that?' snapped Hugh, rather ungratefully, Isabella thought.

The Master's contumelious eyes dwelt tolerantly upon the young man, who would be used to the full before being thrown away. 'A scholar devoted to good works,' he murmured modestly. Turlough's amusement was, for a brief moment, greater than his discomfort and he had to smile.

The gaoler clumped into the dungeon and batted a benighted eye at the returned Iron Maiden. All he'd had was a pint of ale.

'Release your Lord and Lady!' ordered the Master.

The fuddled gaoler was still trying to guess who might have taken advantage and borrowed his keys and whether he would he reported.

'Do as you are hidden,' said Isabella gently, and the confused man took this crumb of comfort gratefully and moved with an urgent clatter to unshackle her.

The Master picked his way elegantly across the filthy, uneven floor to stand by the Iron Maiden. 'You have naught to fear,' he began blandly. 'I am the sworn enemy

of a demon who calls himself the Doctor.' He put a black-gloved hand on the metal Messalina. 'And I have converted his demonic powers to a benign use.'

So, that's it, thought Turlough. The Master's presence here was no coincidence. The High Council of Time Lords had been given galactic intelligence of yet another of the Master's malevolences and dispatched the Doctor to counter it. The TARDIS had been twitched off course to bring them to this time and place. He thought back to the time of their arrival and tried to piece events into some sort of pattern that might have been moved by the Master's mischief.

As the gaoler moved to unfetter Hugh, Isabella rubbed her bruised wrists and stepped, with growing confidence, towards her charming rest uer. 'But what does this Doctor here?'

The Master's voice was sorrowful in reply, as if reluctant to make judgement on another. 'He has come to defame the King. To bring ill reptite to him.'

There was a time when Turlough would have listened, unmoved, to unjust accusations levelled at the Doctor, but that time was no more. The Doctor had proved a paragon. In Turlough's eyes there was no one with greater integrity, courage or charity. He couldn't remain silent.

'No! that's not true!'

Isabella was startled by the suddenness and the vehemence of Turlough's denial. The Master merely ignored it.

'To defame the King,' repeated the bewildered Isabella.

'To what end?'

Again the Master's tone carried complete conviction.

'To set the barons of Britain against him. To provoke a great rebellion and topple him from the throne.'

Turlough heard the culumny with something approaching awe. To be able to lie like that, one would have to be the very personification of evil and none of the Master's innumerable victims would have given Turlough any argument in the matter. He knew the Doctor to be wholly innocent of such an intention and, therefore, it was a fair assumption that the Master had declared his own hand. But why should he want to topple King John from his throne?

'Why?' Hugh had asked the question for him.

'To serve the devilish Doctor's own fell purpose,' came the glib reply. It was too much for Turlough.

'No! Don't listen to him!'

The gaoler, having unchained Hugh, now moved on Turlough.

'No, fellow!' interrupted the Master smoothly. 'Leave him! He serves the Doctor.'

The gaoler stopped short of Turlough as he would before Cerberus at the gates of Hell.

'Don't listen to him, please,' begged Turlough. ' *He's* the evil one!'

The Master was too practised a politician to echo the indignation. He pitched his voice even lower, infusing it with an even sadder, more dulcet, tone. 'We shall see.'

He moved lightly and briskly to the dungeon door.

'Come. Lady! I will return you to the bosom of your husband.'

'Just a minute! Just a minute!' wailed Turlough. If he was going to be abandoned yet again in this impossibly painful posture he owed it to himself to get more

comfortable if he could. Ah, yes! But he wasn't going to be naive enough to ask the Master to ease his position.

The Master allowed Isabella and Hugh to precede him out of the dungeon and then turned to Turlough with mildly enquiring eyebrows.

'It's like this,' began Turlough. 'I don't want to miss what's going on and I could go to sleep like this... hanging like this... it's sort of too comfortable.' The eyebrows elevated a little and Turlough babbled on. 'You couldn't get that chap to lower me a bit, could you? With the arms lower I wouldn't be so comfortable and it'd be easier to keep awake.'

'You get some sleep, my friend,' said the Master with infinite compassion. 'It will do you good.' And the door banged to behind him.

Why was it, thought Turlough, that he could never get anything right?

7

Doctor Captures King's Knight

'We cannot leave our capital to visit our good friends and subjects to be betrayed by a foul usurper. Do you not agree.

Sir Geoffrey?'

'I do, your Majesty.'

Ranulf watched his kinsman anxiously for any sign of defiance at the impostor's baiting, for it was becoming intolerable. The false King had taunted his cousin relentlessly, hinting that consorting with the vile usurper in London was high treason and that, were he not a most merciful monarch, his head could roll. Sir Geoffrey sat at table swallowing insult after insult with his wine, valiantly holding onto a diminishing patience. He looked at Ranulf's drawn face and thought of Isabella, praying for this bizarre audience to end. He allowed his eyes to stray towards the Doctor, now fully dressed as the royal champion. When, if ever, would this man who wanted to be trusted move?

Tegan stood back from the Doctor, the better to look him over. 'What's it feel like?' she asked wonderingly.

'Heavy.'

'Wouldn't you be better off without all that on? You did all right without it, didn't you?'

'Not the point, is it?' muttered the Doctor, giving way to a certain irritation. 'We're playing his game.'

'Oh, we're playing games now, are we?'

'Behave yourself!' warned the Doctor. 'The only plan I've got is to see what develops from this charade.'

'If you can't beat 'em, join 'em?'

'Exactly!' The Doctor, who had overheard a lot of the needling inflicted on Sir Geoffrey, had already worked out his first move. Black King's knight would take White King's knight as soon as there was an opening. It was for the Black King to move first.

'Come, is our champion not ready?'

The Doctor turned to face the impostor. 'Ready, sire.'

'Then let him approach us with his squire.'

Tegan darted a quick look at the Doctor to find him regarding her curiously. That character with the crown on couldn't possibly mean her, but the Doctor clearly thought he did. 'Come on,' he muttered and moved heavily towards the impostor. Tegan followed, suspecting that she might be getting hysterical because she couldn't stop feeling she wanted to laugh. The impostor King rose to meet them and expectation stirred the assembled company.

'Your sword.' demanded the spurious John.

The Doctor wasn't sure it was he who was being addressed until he remembered that he was now wearing a sword.

'Come! Your sword! We grow tired.'

The Doctor drew his sword rather fumblingly, being very much out of practice. He'd had sartorial experience of this particular epoch only once before when he'd

been involved in the Holy Land with King Joint's brother and the Saracen Sultan. Saladin. Holding the weapon hilt foremost, he presented it to the man claiming to be Richard the Lionheart's youngest brother.

'Kneel!' commanded the impostor.

The Doctor obeyed but not without an anxious moment when he doubted the flexibility of his chainmail hosen. He was touched on each shoulder with the broadsword, none too gently, he thought. He wasn't exactly a petty person, but he'd remember that.

'Rise, Sir Doctor!'

The Doctor regained his feet with even more difficulty than he'd had getting to his knees and he was given back his sword by one of the Frenchmen.

'You are now our champion.'

The time had conic for the Doctor to make his move.

He glanced at Sir Geoffrey and mentally crossed his fingers. His ploy depended on there being no demonstration by the Fitzwilliam clan who might be pushed beyond endurance by what he had to do.

'Your Majesty does me great honour,' he said deferentially with a bow of homage. 'I shall do my best to be worthy of it and serve my Liege as he deserves.'

The barb in the inaugural speech wasn't lost on Tegan who noticed it wasn't lost on the galah in the crown either.

The thin lips had got thinner and the narrow eyes narrower. There were signs that the Doctor was going to be reckless and she didn't like it.

'And my first duty must be,' the Doctor went on, 'to safeguard your Majesty from a self-confessed traitor.' He pointed dramatically at Sir Geoffrey. 'Arrest that man in the King's name! I arrest Sir Geoffrey de Lacey on a charge of high treason.'

Tegan shared the audible shock that vibrated in the Hall. Ranulf's hand went instinctively to his sword hilt, an action imitated by his liegemen until the baron remembered his wife and raised a hand to still any possible rebellion. He looked at the Doctor with a horror that rapidly changed to loathing. The Doctor turned away horn the look. The old chap's pain was quite unbearable.

The false King's thin lips stretched into a vulpine smile as two of the French knights converged on Sir Geoffrey.

'We are grateful, Sir Doctor.'

Sir Geoffrey spoke bitterly to his cousin without taking his contemptuous eyes from the Doctor. 'What trust is this, Ranulf? If this treacherous cur be friend of thine, 'tis none of mine.'

The two Frenchmen took hold of Sir Geoffrey and he threw them from him with a violence that told the Doctor he would have to act quickly if he was to avert a disastrous reprisal from the Fitzwilliam faction. As the French knights shaped to renew their attempts to take Sir Geoffrey the Doctor spoke with sharp authority.

'Unhand him!'

The Frenchmen gave way immediately; a move that relaxed the tension and took heat from the dangerous situation, allowing the Doctor to continue. 'He is a man of honour and shall be used as such.' He forced himself to look at Ramat. 'My Lord Ranulf, is there a dungeon in the castle?'

Ranulf would have given much to spare his kinsman humiliation and discomfort by denying he had punitive accommodation. The fact that he found no use for it,

however, was not proof that it did not exist and this dishonourable Doctor would surely find it for himself. The baron did nothing to keep the contempt from his voice.

'There is.'

The Doctor turned to his prisoner. 'Do you know it, Sir Geoffrey?'

'Aye.'

'Then be so good as to lead me to it!'

Tegan looked at the Doctor in hurt wonder. Whatever he was up to there couldn't, surely. be any need to inflict such cruelty on this brave man. But the Doctor's intention seemed very much to the taste of the impostor King. His chuckle was inhuman.

'We like our new champion. He is something of a jester.'

Sir Geoffrey had not moved. He looked defiantly at the Doctor, giving cold consideration to forcing a fight. He had numbers on his side and if he could take this smirking impostor who was plainly a bully and, therefore, a coward, he could be held against the safe return of Isabella.

The Doctor, whose great age and experience had given him a profound insight into the human condition akin to an ability to read the mind's eye, saw the renewal of danger and lifted the point of his sword to threaten Sir Geoffrey. 'I must insist, Sir Geoffrey, that you take me to the dungeon,'

he said quietly.

Still the noble knight held his ground, forcing the Doctor into a distasteful display of psychological force.

'You have no choice. Must I remind you that my sovereign Lord holds the Lady Isabella hostage?'

The Doctor saw that Sir Geoffrey needed no such reminder and that the defiant eyes still held the resolve to retaliate. He knew he had no alternative but to play the trump card of probing deep into superstitious fear.

'Come, Sir Geoffrey, let me read your thoughts. You think that because you and your liegemen outnumber us you have a good chance of capturing the King and thus saving the Lady Isabella.' He saw the flicker of confirmation in the other's eyes and went on relentlessly.

'But I must remind you of something else. I am the King's demon and I have the power ... on an instant to conjure terrible fiends to torment the Lady Isabella. And I can do this with the speed of thought, so ... be warned.'

Tegan groaned inwardly. He was never going to get away with this. Because she knew the Doctor incapable of any such action, both physically and morally, she thought the others would also find the threat unconvincing. But she miscalculated the manners and mores of medieval England. In the world she knew, centuries of convention had pushed primitive behaviour to a depth that was socially acceptable, had swept it under the carpet, but there were no such carpets in this day and age; primitive behaviour was very near the surface. Tegan saw that the Doctor's silly threat was taken very seriously indeed. And his demon's status had been confirmed by the fact that he could read minds.

'And I thought you friend.' There was deep disgust in Ranulf's voice.

'A friend in need is a friend indeed,' the Doctor returned lightly, adding, with a wink at the aggrieved baron, 'Deed?'

Ranulf took this impish behaviour at its historical face value. It confirmed the Doctor's innate wickedness in the old man's eyes. He looked appealingly at his kinsman.

'Geoffrey?'

The courageous knight saw that capitulation was his only choice and began to move, saying dolorously. 'For you, cousin.' The Doctor stood back out of his way but stepped into the path of the-French knights as they made to follow, waving them aside. 'No, my friends! Attend the King! I have no need of assistance.'

The knights gave way and the Doctor saluted the impostor wiih his sword as he moved after Sir Geoffrey.

Tegan followed half-heartedly, divided in her heart by loyalty and her desire to say something of comfort to the suffering Ranulf. She looked back to see the false King yawn offensively and heard him announce that he would retire to rest awhile. Lord RanuIf looked so forlorn, defeated and deserted that she desperately wanted to dally and tell him that the being he thought to be a demon and despicable was, after all, to be trusted and would give his life, if necessary, to make everything all right in the end.

But she had seen the baron's household in the tight grip of superstitious terror and knew that she wouldn't be believed.

Tegan caught up with the Doctor on the way down the main staircase. There was little light on the steep, worn, stone steps and she felt the pace of their descent unsafe as they tried to keep up with the captive knight, whose familiarity with the passage made his progress surer. 'Have we got to go so fast?' she complained.

'Yes,' said the Doctor. '"Tred thou in them boldly!"'

'What?'

'"Mark his footsteps well, my squire!"'

Tegan wasn't amused. Why did he always have to make silly jokes at all the wrong moments? If he had some plan of action why couldn't he be serious about it?

'What's the idea?' she hissed.

'Idea?'

'What're you doing with this poor man?'

The Doctor delayed his answer to right his balance after his unaccustomed and cumbersome footwear had very nearly brought about a dangerous downfall.

'In the interests of security, where is the Master most likely to house his TARDIS?'

Tegan thought about this for a moment before being smitten by the full force of sudden realisation.

'A dungeon?'

She could hear the Doctor purring with delight but her joy at simultaneously finding the right answer and discovering the Doctor's plan was to be short-lived.

'By my halidom, Tegan, you catch on fast!'

Why, you ... pompous, conceited, overbearing so-and-so, she thought. You can fall down the stairs and see if I care!

The Master stopped suddenly in the narrow, subterranean passage and held up his hand. Isabella and Hugh stopped behind him and they too, now that they were still, could hear the approaching footsteps from the direction of the stairway. The Master turned and put a finger to his lips before shrinking into the shadow of a deep niche in the thick wall and drawing his companions with him.

In the dark stone tunnel beneath the castle bailey it was impossible to see clearly and Sir Geoffrey had passed before Hugh recognised him, but the Master's hand, clapped suddenly and tightly over the youth's mouth, prevented him from speaking and from moving into the path of the Doctor and the still fuming Tegan. It wasn't until his time-honoured adversary was well out of earshot that the Master took his gloved hand from Hugh's mouth and signalled that it was safe to continue.

Turlough heard renewed movement outside the dungeon with a resurgence of hope which became buoyant when he heard the Doctor's voice commanding the gaoler to open the dungeon door.

'But this is Sir Geoffrey de Lacey!' protested the bemused gaoler squinting in the shifting light from the torch bracketed to the wall.

'I know who it is. Please don't give me any trouble,' said the Doctor irritably.

'Do as he says, Cedric,' Sir Geoffrey said. 'He is the King's Champion.'

The man gulped, looking from one to the other and also very distracted by Tegan. One stoup of ale, that's all he'd had, one stoup. The King's Champion, was it? Then he'd changed a lot since yesterday when he'd brought that Iron Maiden in.

''Twas a Frenchman yesterday, Sir Geoffrey,' mumbled the stupefied Cedric. 'He put me here when he brought his Maiden.'

It was Sir Geoffrey's win for puzzlement. 'Maiden?' In answer Cedric pointed towards the dungeon. The good knight looked thoughtful. A wench in there? These French had some very strange customs. He turned to the Doctor, sensing a need to offer an explanation. 'This man is no gaoler. He is my steward. We have no need for gaolers here.'

'I'm delighted to hear it.'

Turlough had had more than enough. Was the Doctor going to take all day? He yelled at the top of his voice,

'Doctor!'

'Turlough!' Tegan squeaked.

The Doctor skipped to the dungeon door and peered through the bars of the grille into the Stygian gloom, for the sun had lowered behind the castle keep and less light came in from the bailey.

'Turlough?' he enquired.

'About time!' rebounded the wrathful voice from the dark, 'It's not very pleasant in here.'

The Doctor turned to Sir Geoffrey's conscripted steward and gestured to the door. 'Be a good fellow, Cedric!' The look between servant and master was answered with an affirmative nod and Cedric fumbled again with unfamiliar keys to open the dungeon door. The Doctor prodded his way into the murk, using his sword as a blind man would use his stick and forgetting Sir Geoffrey in the excitement of finding Turlough. The knight, thus unguarded, would have considered flight had he not been curious about the occupants of the dungeon and the apparent change in the demon Doctor from the false King's champion to a rather more agreeable personality primarily concerned with someone called Turlough. Tegan was in no hurry to follow the Doctor so Sir Geoffrey went into the dungeon ahead of her.

With eyes now more adjusted to the contrasted light the Doctor could see Turlough's cruel predicament and readily understood his vexation. He bundled Cedric forward, exhorting him to free the captive, and immediately turned his interest to what had brought him to this sombre place; the Iron Maiden.

‘Doctor, it’s the Master!’ babbled Turlough. ‘That’s his TARDIS.’

‘Yes. Sheer genius!’

Tegan had crept in after Sir Geoffrey and now stood beside the knight as he looked at the Iron Maiden in bewilderment. They were joined by Turlough, busy flapping his hands in an attempt to restore the circulation.

‘Poor Turlough,’ murmured Tegan.

‘What kept you?’ he moaned accusingly.

‘You can have no idea. We’ve been -’

‘All right, all right!’ cut in the Doctor quickly.

‘Explanations later. Let’s not waste time. Sir Geoffrey, you are no longer a prisoner.’

The fact of his freedom seemed to be of secondary importance to the simple knight who was staring in horror and fascination at the Iron Maiden. He pointed an unsteady finger.

‘Is he still within?’

‘Who?’

‘The Frenchman.’

‘Ah!’ responded the Doctor, remembering that to Sir Geoffrey the Master’s TARDIS was no more than Gilles Estram’s coffin. ‘Yes. Well...’ How was he to explain to this early thirteenth-century knight-at-arms that he was a Time Lord, that he had the power to travel through time and space, that his arch-enemy, the Master, could do likewise and that the erstwhile Gilles Estram did not exist and had never existed except in that Estram was an anagram of Master? In his mind’s eyes he could picture the expression of the poor man’s face even when wrestling with the explanation of ‘anagram’. ‘The short answer, Sir Geoffrey, is that Gilles Estram is not still within. I have to ask you to trust me just as I asked Lord Ranulf to trust me.’

The Doctor could see, even in the dim light, that he wasn’t reaching very far into the knight’s fevered consciousness. fie swallowed and tried again. ‘Try to understand. We are your friends. Your enemy is someone called the Master.’

‘The Master?’

‘That’s right.’ The Doctor took heart that he’d made a successful beginning, however modest. ‘He is also my enemy so we must join forces and fight him together.’

‘The Master?’

‘Yes.’

‘Who are you? What are you?’ asked the sorely troubled Sir Geoffrey. Again the Doctor could see precious time being wasted on an explanation that could only be disbelieved or not comprehended. ‘Please trust me,’ he said simply.

The unhappy knight wanted to but he’d been torn first one way and then another in a course of events quite beyond his understanding. This man, the Doctor, had saved his life by challenging the fake King’s Champion whom he had defeated in combat. But then he had taken the villain’s place and arrested him on a charge of high treason to bring him here. Why? He remembered what Ranulf had said about the man.

‘The man here who calls himself King is an impostor.’

‘Yes, he is.’

‘Then why do you serve him?’

The Doctor saw a chink of light and sought to widen it fast, ‘To gain time and to find this.’ He put a hand on the Iron Maiden. ‘It is not what it seems. It is the Master’s

engine in which he hides to cast strange spells. I guessed it would be here but I also had to get you away from the impostor. So I arrested you.'

'It's true, Sir Geoffrey,' put in Tegan. 'Please trust the Doctor. You *can*.'

The knight was tired. He'd had no sleep for two nights and had ridden that day from London to be forced into a spirited fight lot his life by Gilles Estram and his men.

Tegan's earnestness made a great appeal. 'Very well, Doctor,' he said, 'I put my trust in you.'

'Good!' enthused the Doctor. Now we can get on!'

'Just a minute! Just a minute!' interrupted Turlough indignantly. 'Get on with what? What about *my* trust?

What about *my* enemies? Who's doing what to whom and why? I'm dragged down into this hole by that young ruffian whose life you saved this morning. Then he's going to put me into that thing.' He flicked a hand at the Iron Maiden. 'Then I'm hung up on the wall by that hairy Frenchman ... Estram. Then the other two get rescued by the Master but I'm left there... hanging... and not a sign on my ...' He stopped short, overcome by the suddenness of thought and his mouth and eyes wide in realisation. 'It's an anagram! Estram! It's an anagram!'

'Well done, Turlough! said the Doctor without malice.

'He was the Master!'

'Correct.'

'But why?'

The Doctor decided that now was as good a time as any to complete the picture for his companions and to include their new ally, however uncomprehending. 'The Master is passing off a double as King John of England.'

'But why?'

'To change the course of history.'

'But I thought that wasn't possible,' said Turlough.

Again the Doctor was on the horns of that dilemma familiar to every good leader. Should he spend precious time on explanation, or risk leading followers who were ignorant of the nature of the operation? The Doctor had faced this 'course of history' question often before. A Time Lord could never change history by direct, or even indirect, action but it was always possible to seek to influence it. A Time Lord couldn't change the course of Christopher Columbus' ship and so prevent the discovery of the New World, but who was to say that it wasn't a Time Lord who had whispered encouragement and been the inspiration of the discovery in the first place? Deep mystery was still attached to all manner of forces and influences. Historians would be the first to agree that the motives for human behaviour couldn't always be contained within clinical explanation. In this case the Master was avoiding even indirect manipulation of power. He was embarked on a pernicious mental pollution; a smear campaign with which readers of twentieth-century newspapers would be more than familiar.

'Not to change the course of history *directly*,' said the Doctor to Turlough, 'but that's not going to stop him from trying another way.'

'What other way?' questioned Tegan irritably.

'To make the King so unpopular that the barons will rebel and depose him. The Master's trying to rob the world of Magna Carta.'

'Big deal!'

‘It takes on rather larger proportions,’ continued the Doctor patiently, ‘if you consider the implications. What King John set his seal to in June this year wasn’t the Magna Carta ...’ The Doctor became conscious that he was looking at the blank face of Sir Geoffrey’de Lacey, knight, for whom 15 June 1215 was still more than three months ahead, but he carried on bravely. ‘It was a much smaller document that was to become thr Great Charter ten years later in the reign of his son, Henry.’ The Doctor couldn’t resist another quiet glance at Sir Geoffrey but fortunately the expression on the knight’s face remained totally blank,

‘It was that Great Charter, the Magna Carta. that was to become the foundation stone of parliamentary democracy,’

The Doctor looked directly at Tegan. ‘Democracy, Tegan.

Something of much greater importance than central heating.’

I’ll believe you,’ said Tegan grudgingly, more impressed than she was prepared to admit; she’d had more than enough history for one clay. Turlough, having managed to stimulate his blood circulation, was again suffering excruciating pins and needles.

‘Do any further plans include getting out of this dungeon?’ he asked quietly but with heavy sarcasm.

‘Because, if so, I wouldn’t mind something to eat arid drink.’ Tegan immediately felt guilty, remembering her generous helping of roast pork. ‘I’ll go and get you something,’ she said.

‘Oh, no you don’t,’ objected the Doctor, ‘We’re not going to be separated again. We’ll get him something on the way.’ He produced the Master’s Compresser from under his surcoat and moved to the Iron Maiden to make a minute examination of its surface while continuing to speak. ‘Sir Geoffrey?’

‘Aye?’

‘Are you well known to the King? The *true* King?’

‘Aye. Did we not take the oath together this morning?’

‘Yes. Then we must get you back to London quickly.

You must tell the King about all that has happened here,’

The Doctor had found what he was looking for; a slot in the metal casing of the Maiden. Tegan watched as he pushed the Master’s Compressor into the slot he’d found, causing the horrible thing to hum slightly.

‘I will to horse on the instant.’ said Sir Geoffrey.

‘No! I can get you there much quicker.’ The Doctor had such touching faith in that old TARDIS of his that he never had anything less than complete confidence about it going exactly where he wanted it to go. ‘I have an engine,’

he announced with quiet pride.

Which is just as likely to get us to Long Island as London, thought Tegan. Long Island in 1215. Think of it!

All those Red Indians! The Doctor adjusted something on the Master’s Compressor which quietened the hum. He moved to Sir Geoffrey. ‘But first we must bring it here into the castle.’

‘The TARDIS in here?’ bleated Tegan.

‘Yes.’

‘But why, for Pete’s sake? Why can’t we all just get out of here while the going’s good?’

‘For one simple reason; we must take the impostor with us.’

‘Oh, no! Why?’

‘To expose the Master’s plan.’

Tegan sighed. She saw, at once, the logic of it; confronting a phoney King John with the real thing was a statement of fact not to be improved on. But what of the hazards on the way, not the least of which was the unreliability of the TARDIS? To Tegan’s mind it was going to be dodgy getting out of the castle. more dodgy getting back into it with the TARDIS, and most dodgy getting out again. But she could see there would be no stopping the Doctor as she watched him turn an eager face to the man called Cedric and then hack to Sir Geoffrey.

‘Is there a way out of the castle from here without going back near the Great Hall?’

‘Aye. At the end of the passage there arc steps to the gate.’

The Doctor had guessed as much. In these days there were certain guests who were never seen in the Great Hall.

In fact, once through the castle gate, many were never to be seen again. They could use this secret approach to the dungeon to leave the castle without being observed.

‘Come on!’ said the Doctor and made for the door.

Then, arrested by a sudden thought, he moved back to the Iron Maiden and pulled the Master’s Compressor from the slot in its side. After a moment of indecision he put the Compressor on the floor at his feet and prodded an admonitory finger at the stolid Cedric. an action which quite frightened the man.

‘That is not to be touched by anyone,’ he warned.

‘Something very unpleasant will happen to anyone who touches it.’

It was clear from Cedric’s already glazing eyes that he had no intention of touching it, not even with a twelve-foot battle lance. But Tegan was horrified. ‘You’re not leaving that there!’

‘I am.’ The Doctor was never more smug.

‘For the Master?’

‘As a sort of bait.’

‘Bait?’

‘Some people catch fish with it. Now, come on!’

The Doctor led the way out of the dungeon. Cedric was the last to leave. He edged to the door without taking his eyes from the Compressor as if expecting the thing to follow him. Having reached the safety of the passage he closed the door carefully and locked it before going quickly in search of another stoup of ale.

8

'Find These Demons!'

The Master smiled widely at Hugh Fitzwilliam, suggesting that he shared to the full the youth's pleasure at the touching reunion of his parents. Ranulf had retired to his bed chamber to brood alone just as Isabella knew he would.

She had brought the Master there, and now man and wife were in each others's arms and deeply in debt to the man who had made it possible. Ranulf gently detached himself from Isabella and looked with gratitude on her rescuer. 'I am most grateful...' He hesitated. The reunion had been so intense that introductions had been forgotten.

'I am called the Master.'

'Name what you will. Lord Master! It shall be yours.'

The Master waved a hand in a deprecatory gesture that proved him the most modest of men. 'I ask no reward, my Lord. I wish merely to rid the King of his demons. That is why I am come.'

Ranulf had never had two such days in his long life. He had survived arduous campaigns in France, in the Lowlands and in the Holy Land. He had seen many strange things that had strained his belief, and he had been told of demons and known that they had been the cause of some of the ills from which the Lord God had delivered him but he had never seen demons before. Was this yet another demon? Hugh read the expression on his father's face.

'He is no demon, Father.'

'Nay, I am no demon, good my Lord.'

'He is from London, Father.'

'Hard on the heels of Sir Geoffrey,' added the Master, 'It was he who was deceived by the usurper brought to London by the demon Doctor. The demon who continues to afflict the King here.'

This was nearer to the truth of things, thought Ranulf.

This Doctor who had come to Wallingford so strangely had been greeted by the King as his demon. He had then prevailed with the King to shame his son and to take his wife hostage before ridding the King of his true champion and making his cousin Geoffrey captive. This was the only demon.

'How long has the King been thus afflicted?' asked the baron anxiously.

'Who can tell, my Lord? Perhaps he has always been accursed. Not for nothing are the Angevins known as "the devil's brood".'

'He has never acted so before, Lord Master.'

'Bear with me, my Lord, when I tell you that I am a master of demonology summoned by the King's physicians to root out these demons from his Majesty. They can take possession of a soul and lie in wait for years before fulfilling their infernal purpose.'

Ranulf and Isabella exchanged concerned looks. It was terrifying to think what Powers of Darkness might lurk within them, awaiting the opportunity to lay claim to the Devil's work. It was a long time since Ranulf had seen a priest. The King had no liking for priests nor they for him.

Was this, perchance, the reason for the visitation? Was the Devil already securely in place? The baron envied the serenity that exuded from the Lord Master.

‘Have you any power against this sorcery?’

‘I have.’

‘Yes, Father!’ Hugh remembered how the Master had come to his rescue, turning the evil Doctor’s power to his own use. ‘And there’s little magic in the one manacled in the dungeon. The one they call Turlough.’

Ranulf looked from the flushed and confident face of his son to the supportive serenity of the Lord Master. He felt renewed strength enter his aching bones, His family was together again and here, at last, was a powerful ally to restore the King and return equilibrium to their shattered lives.

‘Then this Doctor demon must be captured and put to the fire.’

The Master’s smile was wide with enthusiastic approval.

He recalled, with artistic appreciation, the Doctor’s brilliant intervention in the afternoon’s entertainment when he’d called for boiling in oil. Things were hotting up very nicely for the dear Doctor as he would be the first to acknowledge. A worthy adversary, the Doctor. The Master wondered how he could possibly get on without him. He would bring him to the brink of disaster, reduce him in scale... metaphorically speaking... and then consider a reprieve in order to preserve an opposition that stretched his genius as no other could. But first, more elementary manipulation of these simple souls.

‘If, my Lord, you will put your knights and men-at-arms at my command ...?’ He left the end of his statement in the air. It was always preferable to leave a victim with some self-respect. It added picquancy to a return bout.

‘It shall be done,’ declared the unsuspecting Ranulf.

Leaving the Doctor and his two companions Sir Geoffrey climbed the steep steps to the small door above. He opened it an inch or two and looked nut across the bailey, finding it deserted. He opened the door wider and eased his way through the gap to took up at the sentry post above the gate. He drew back a little to beckon those below to join him.

‘Fortune favours us,’ he announced quietly. ‘The way is clear and there are no sentries.’

‘And the gate?’ asked the Doctor.

‘There is a wicket.’

‘Good! Then lead on!’

The four left the safety of the steps and hugged the outer wall on the way to the gate. The afternoon was well advanced but the sky was clear after the morning mist and the light was still good. Had they to cross the open expanse of the bailey they ran the risk of being seen by a chance eye from the keep, but the length of wall they had to skirt was in shade and gave good cover. In a matter of seconds they had reached the wicket in the gate and Sir Geoffrey lifted the solid wood bar that held it shut. All four were quickly through and stood outside the castle looking towards the river.

The TARDIS was not to be seen. The long meadow where the tourney had taken place was depressingly empty.

But there were unmistakable signs of the TARDIS. From the spot where it had materialised to the castle gate were the deeply scored tracks of the bullock cart that. told them that the TARDIS had been brought into the castle.

‘That’s that, then,’ moaned Tegan.

‘There’s no need to sound so depressed,’ responded the Doctor. ‘He’s done the job for us.’

‘Who has?’ asked Turlough.

‘Who else? The Master.’

Sir Geoffrey looked at all of them in turn and pointed towards the long meadow as he limped intellectually along the lines of the bullock cart. ‘Your engine is now within the castle,’ he said heavily.

‘I’m afraid you’re right,’ said the Doctor kindly, ‘I’m sorry, Sir Geoffrey.’

‘It matters not. I will alone to London if someone will help me to horse. It is the work of two to lift the gate.’

‘I’ll help,’ volunteered Turlough.

‘My thanks.’

There was no telling where the Master was holding the TARDIS. The Doctor had in fact anticipated that such a move might be made by the Master: it was only to be expected, which was why the Doctor had made his countermove in the dungeon. But the TARDIS had to be found and that would take time. It was a bleak view to take but Sir Geoffrey, on horseback, could be in London before them.

‘Right!’ said the Doctor and turned back to the wicket gate.

‘We’re never going back in there!’ gasped Tegan in dismay.

‘Unless you can come up with a reasonable alternative.’

Tegan looked at the wide eyes and the brows elevated in polite enquiry. ‘Isn’t there a back way?’ It was clear Tegan didn’t know her castles. There was no reason why she should, of course. An interest in medieval castles was the exclusive preserve of small boys, architects and historians.

and in that order; a proposition tested every summer on sandy beaches throughout the land where it was known that you built your castles to house your private army and organise defence against other private armies. It was only natural that the practical feminine mind would demand of the proverbial Englishman’s home that it have a back yard.

‘There’s only the underground way. The way we came by.’

Tegan looked at Turlough who shrugged. He’d go anywhere and do anything as long as he didn’t finish up in the dungeon again. Sir Geoffrey took the Doctor’s place at the wicket gate and scanned the field of view across the bailey. He nodded that all was clear.

‘We’d better say goodbye here,’ suggested the Doctor.

‘Once inside we must go our ways and hurry.’

‘Farewell, Sir Doctor.’

‘Meet you at the Tower of London.’

The Doctor tried to remember if there was a police box near the Tower. It would be rather droll to anticipate it by eight centuries.

‘What about me?’ asked Turlough.

‘Hide in the stables, We’ll find you there,’ said the Doctor. He took the knight by the arm. ‘Remember to tell the King everything. The Master may have tried to turn many against him before coming here. Remember Gilles Estram!’

‘He stays in my memory,’ said the knight grimly. Once through the gate the four separated, the Doctor and Tegan keeping dose to the outer wall and Sir Geoffrey leading Turlough boldly across the bailey in a direct line to the stables. The Doctor watched the others until they were out of sight. There was no sign of life at any of the windows in the keep and there was a good chance they had not been observed. So far, so good.

Tegan recoiled from the dark maw at the top of the steps as the Doctor pushed open the door. She was convinced that once down there they would never come out again. It was like being swallowed whole. The Doctor was down the steps before realising he wasn't being followed. He looked back and saw Tegan in silhouette.

'Come on! What are you waiting for?'

'You,' said Tegan shortly. 'Come back up here!'

The Doctor actually flinched. He wasn't used to being spoken to in such a fashion; being on the receiving end of peremptory orders from a marooned stewardess from an Antipodean airline. But there was something in her tone of voice, something in the stance of that silhouette, that he'd not seen or heard before. It wasn't just the rebellion, the defiance of his authority, it was an expression of the total supremacy of a woman who knows she is unquestionably in the right. The Doctor went back up. Tegan was looking across at the keep. He followed her gaze, expecting to be invited to witness some foreseeable disaster.

'May I ask why we're going back in there?'

Since she knew very well why they had to go back, the Doctor knew the question to be rhetorical and that it boded ill for him, but he went along with it: 'To look for the TARDIS.'

'Would you mind telling me how many doors there are into that place?'

The Doctor studied the front elevation of the keep which was of traditional Norman design, square and extending to four levels. There was one small door at the top of a short flight of stone steps.

'Two, I should think. One you can see; the other will be at the back or at the side.'

'Will the one round the back be any bigger than that one?'

'Smaller if anything.'

'Then would you very much mind telling me,' -

and Tegan coiled herself to deliver the mental *coup de grâce*

- 'how the Master could possibly have got the TARDIS

through either door?'

'He wouldn't have tried. He's not stupid.'

'Thank you!' Tegan looked at the intellectual giant as from a great height. You see! *She* wasn't stupid either.

'Is that all you called me back for?' the Doctor enquired mildly.

'Isn't it enough?'

'The Doctor shrugged. 'If you say so. Now, come on!

Please!' He went quickly back down the steps leaving an incredulous Tegan.

'Where're you going?'

'To look for the TARDIS.'

'But you've just said it's not in there!'

'I said nothing of the sort.' And the Doctor turned and disappeared into the dark of the passage.

If Tegan had no liking for going back into those dark, dank, dangerous depths she had less liking for being left alone. She hurried down the steps after the Doctor, cursing his obstinacy and his incorrigibility. She ran into something soft and yielding and gurgled painfully in a suppressed scream.

'Watch where you're going!' admonished the Doctor.

Tegan clung to him. 'Listen! What's the point of going back in there?'

'To find the TARDIS.'

‘But, Doctor!’ exploded Tegan.

The Doctor took hold of her firmly and shook her. ‘Stop it!’ he told her. ‘Control yourself! We’ve got to go quietly.

There’s no telling who may be about. Now, you listen! We don’t have to take the TARDIS through doorways, Neither does the Master. All he has to do is set coordinates.’

For once Tegan was grateful for the dark. She could feel, in spite of the cold and the damp, that her cheeks were on fire. How could she be so stupid? She was frightened, that’s why. She remembered the Doctor saying a long time ago that it wasn’t only stupid people who behaved stupidly; it was the frightened ones as well. The TARDIS would have been brought through the castle gate by Sir Gilles Estram, as the cart tracks witnessed. Sir Gilles would have made a great show of this, a parade, to demonstrate his mortal power over the infernal power of the Doctor but, unobserved, he could enter the TARDIS by neutralising the lock with his Compressor and take it where he chose.

As the Doctor said, all the Master had to do was to set the coordinates.

‘Sorry,’ she mumbled. ‘Stupid.’

‘No. You’re frightened.’

Tegan fumed quietly in the gloom. Why did be just always have to be right?

‘Better now?’ asked the Doctor gently.

‘Not really ... I can’t help feeling it’s "come into my parlour, said the spider to the fly".’

‘You’re forgetting something else.’

‘What?’ snapped Tegan touchily.

‘That I quite like spiders.’

Tegan followed after the Doctor, breathing hard, If he met a violent death it was just as likely to be at the hands of a friend.

Ranulf had been as good as his word. He had marshalled his liegetnen and men-at-arms and they were grouped about the Master and Isabella in the Great Hall in attitudes of respect and reverence as their baron concluded the saga of his lady’s rescue by the newly-arrived Lord from London.

‘We have seen much happen here these two days past much that is hard to explain. The Lord Master has come to end all that. He has come to rid the King of his demons from whom we have no more to fear. Obey the Lord Master in all things!’

There came a chorus of enthusiastic declarations of allegiance to the charismatic newcomer whose hypnotic eyes compelled devotion unto death. Here, at last, was a hero who would lead them against the dreaded Doctor and save the King from his evil enchantment.

‘Father!’ called Hugh from the staircase. A path was cleared for the young Fitzwilliam as he tramped to the baron, flanked by men-at-arms. The youth’s face was flushed and contorted with anger. ‘The dungeon is empty.’

The news drew a growl from the ranks of the fighting men and all eyes turned instinctively to the Master, but that worthy knew better than overtly to usurp the baron’s authority. The lust for power was too easily understood, and the quest for power was too easily recognised. The bewitched King and the bewitching Gilles Estram had effectively set the stomach against tendencies to tyranny.

To balance that, his authority must be benevolent, sympathetic. He would be their guide, philosopher and, above all, friend. He kept his eyes firmly upon Ranulf.

Isabella had clutched at her husband's arm to still the thumping of sudden fear. 'Geoffrey! Have they taken Geoffrey?' The anger in Ranulf's eyes and those of her son answered her question more certainly than if they had given voice. Would there never be an end to their pain?

Ranulf saw the tears come to her eyes and his fury errupted. 'Find these demons and bring them hither,' he roared. The Master stepped closer to the baron and said quietly, 'And the engine. Without it they are helpless.'

'And the engine'' roared Ranulf loudly, 'The blue engine!'

As the angry ranks broke the Master added, 'I saw it by the stables.'

'By the stables!' thundered Ranulf.

The Master watched the Great. Hall emptying with an urgency that gave him great satisfaction. The Doctor's TARDIS had been left near the stables by Sir Gilles Estram but the Master had caused it to be moved elsewhere to a place that would incriminate the good Doctor even more. He would see to it, in the fullness of time, that the TARDIS be discovered because of his auspice, through his divine intervention.

Hugh turned back, conscious that all their force was being deployed in search of the demons and their engine.

'What of the King? Is he guarded?'

'I have seen to this,' said the Master smoothly. 'His French bodyguard attends his Majesty.'

Did Hugh but know it, his French bodyguard did not attend his Majesty or anything remotely resembling it. The French bodyguard had been paid off by the Master and was carousing away the gold on the way to Gloucester where it would be re-engaged yet again to support the impostor King in alienating yet another unsuspecting baron, Dudley of Grimswade. But Hugh continued on his way to hunt down the Doctor, content in the knowledge that the King would come to no further harm tinder his father's roof.

The Master smiled widely and serenely upon the Lord Ranulf and the Lady Isabella. 'With your permission, my Lord, I will oversee the search and then attend the King.'

'God go with you,' said the grateful Ranulf.

'You're hurting met' squealed Tegan.

'Shh!' hissed the Doctor.

The Doctor was clearly unaware of the strength of his grip on her arm when he'd jerked her unceremoniously into an inky black embrasure.

'Can't you hear it?'

'What?' asked Tegan in an answering whisper.

'I can hear something.'

Tegan listened hard for a moment. At first all she could hear was the thumping in her ears that kept in strict time to the horrid hammering in her head but then, after a while, she heard a sort of moaning. 'It's someone singing,'

she whispered.

'Singing?'

'Well, humming, sort of.'

'Wait here!' ordered the Doctor. As the Doctor crept carefully onward into the black passage Tegan listened to the humming. It was all she could hear apart from the hammering in her head which was getting worse. The Doctor was gone for an age, or so it seemed to her. He was infuriating, but you did feel safe with him - most of

the time. When she heard him or someone, corning back, she panicked for a moment before common sense got the better of her fear by telling her that if she were in danger the Doctor would have shouted to her.

'It's all right,' the Doctor's voice came out of the dark.

'It's Cedric.'

'What?'

'It's Cedric whistling in the dark, or humming in the dark. He's trying to keep his ale down and his spirits up.

He's frightened, too. Come on!'

The passage ahead of them curved slightly, something that Tegan had not remembered in her relieved flight from the dungeon. and their way was soon made easier by the uncertain light of the wall torch Cedric had lived by for the last two days. The unwilling gaoler lay on his palliasse hugging his half-empty stoup and humming, his glazed eyes now very slightly crossed. They uncrossed, quite startingly, as they did their best to get the Doctor and Tegan into focus. His fuddled senses were still able to grasp that the new threat came from a different quarter, from the gate. He rolled onto his knees and then got shakily to his feet, cowering before the intruders.

'It's all right, Cedric. it's only us,' announced the Doctor soothingly. 'No ghosts. No demons.' He moved to the dungeon door. 'Have you had any visitors?'

'The young Lord,' stammered Cedric. 'Lord Hugh.'

The Doctor pushed at the door which was still locked.

Cedric groped for his ring of keys and offered them at arm's length. The Doctor smiled his approval. 'Has anything been ... disturbed?' The wretched man shook his head. The Master's Compressor was better guarded than any prisoner. None would dare to go near it save the Master.

Since the entire complement of the castle had been summoned to the Great Hall the stables were deserted. Sir Geoffrey and Turlough were able to select a mount and saddle it without being molested. To move with the horse across the cobbled bailey was too noisy an operation to be kept secret so they made a dash for the gate, relying on speed alone to get the knight away. Sir Geoffrey tethered the horse and pointed to a ladder that gave access to the sentry platform above. After a quick look at the keep he began to climb and Turlough followed.

The Master watched their progress from an arrow slit.

His wide smile was no more than a cruel exposure of teeth as he saw Sir Geoffrey remove the linchpin from the windlass. Both men strained at the handles and the heavy gate lifted slowly with the crude ratchet rasping against the pawl as the mass was winched higher. The noise unnerved Turlough and he threw look after tortured look in the direction of the keep. The noise also drew two other spectators to the overlooking arrow slits but the Master held up a hand to stay any action. He was in no hurry. He watched the lumbering lifting of the gate with the obscene pleasure of a mindless boy watching the struggles of wingless flies.

'What's this, then?' asked Tegan, peering in the half light at the vats and bins filling the wall space to the low ceiling.

'It'll be the storeroom,' whispered the Doctor. They had found a passage that skirted the area beneath the Great Hall and, following it away from the main staircase, had come upon this basement cavern. Tegan suddenly felt trapped, like a fox run to earth. Aware that she'd already made a complete fool of herself and not wanting to

do so again in a hurry, Tegan had been keeping her thoughts to herself, Then anxiety overcame inhibition.

'Doctor!' Her voice was plaintive. 'It's probably stupid

... but could I say something?'

'What?'

'There was a Magna Carta. Right?'

'Yes,' agreed the Doctor wonderingly.

'Then why are we doing all this?'

'All what?'

'Risking our lives? If there was a Magna Carta the Master couldn't have succeeded, could he?'

'No, because we balanced each other.'

'You mean we won?'

'Oh, yes. We won. But we don't know how we won, do we? Aren't you just a little bit curious?'

'About who gets killed, you mean?'

The Doctor smiled reassuringly. He moved down the canyon of tasks that represented what remained of the castle's winter supplies and into the corner embrasure. He turned back to Tegan and beckoned. She came forward to join him and he pointed at the embrasure. A narrow flight of steps spiralled steeply upwards. 'I was right,' he said quietly. 'That'll go up to the kitchens and the Great Hall.

With a bit of luck it'll go even higher.'

'It would help if we knew where to look,' muttered Tegan.

'But we do know where to look.'

'Where?'

'He'll have put the TARDIS where he keeps the King.'

'Where's that?'

'In a castle,' explained the Doctor. 'the guest of honour has the chamber right at the top. It's the safest place, you see. Any attackers have to fight their way up the stairs.'

'Well, I hope we don't,' grumbled Tegan.

'Let's keep it quiet, then,' said the Doctor and led the way up the stairs.

It was a long way up the turret in that far corner of the keep. The space allowed them only to move in single file and the wedge-shaped treads were so narrow they seemed more like footholds in a cliff. They passed through the corner of one of the two kitchens, unnoticed by the boys cleaning platters and quarrelling over scraps, and began to climb to the next floor. The going was very slow because of the compelling need to be quiet and Tegan, whose headache had improved after getting away from the dungeon, thought she heard something behind her. She caught her breath as her stomach muscles contracted with the rush of fear. She had only to move her hand a matter of inches to hold onto the Doctor's ankles. He stopped instantly. 'What?' he whispered.

'Shh!'

The sepulchral hush was broken only by heavy breathing - their own. After a moment Tegan was relaxed enough to touch the Doctor's ankle again and their climb was resumed. The light in the turret began slowly to increase as they approached the next floor. As the Doctor's eyes drew level with the last step he saw, with shock, a forest of legs surrounding the turret and cutting short any further progress. He reached

the floor without a marked diminution of dignity, but he wore the open smile with which he always acknowledged an unhappy predicament.

He could tell from the set faces of the men-at-arms that the Master had lost no time in blackening him even more in the eyes of the Fitzwilliam household and his smile broadened.

'Well met! Would one of you be good enough to conduct me to the King's chamber?' He didn't expect an answer but the question gave him time to clear the steps and review his situation. He stepped forward but none of the men gave way to him. He noted, with a certain misgiving. that they seemed no longer in awe of him and wondered why they made no sound or movement. It was as if they were waiting for a signal. 'Come,' he bluffed. 'I am, after all, the King's Champion.'

'No longer, Sir Demon!' boomed Hugh's voice from the turret behind Tegan. The Doctor turned around just in time to catch her as she sank into a swoon.

Sir Geoffrey pointed to the linchpin that kept the ratchet-wheel locked. 'Pull that when I'm through the gate,' he said. Turlough nodded and looked in the direction of the keep as the knight clattered down the ladder. He couldn't believe that the noise they had made hadn't been heard, but the bailey remained empty and there was no movement at any of the windows in the keep. The arrow slits were too dark and too narrow to betray the presence of the Master and his two crossbowmen who lurked and waited.

Sir Geoffrey untethered his horse and leaped to mount.

He raised his arm in valediction to Turlough before his right foot found the stirrup; his arm stayed high as he was knocked from the saddle by the two crossbow bolts. The horse had bounded under the open gate before the knight hit the ground.

Turlough tumbled down the ladder and ran to Sir Geoffrey. The knight waved away the boy's helping hands.

'Save yourself!' he gasped.

'No,' said Turlough firmly. 'You need help.'

Kamelion

The TARDIS stood impressive and inappropriate in the middle of the Great Hall, ringed by the exhausted men who had inched its great weight from the King's chamber above. They watched as Ranulf circled the blue engine slowly, prodding tentatively at it with his sword. Having looked at all four sides the baron stopped in front of the door and put out his free hand.

'My Lord!' Isabella's frightened cry turned Ranulf's head, but it did not turn him from his purpose. He laid a firm hand on the door knob and pulled. With his sword at the ready he looked into the TARDIS. What he saw made his eyes stand out in amazement and the sword dropped from his hand. Extreme fear paralysed him until, with Herculean effort, he began to back away from his glimpse into Hades. The cries stayed in his throat as he retreated lutther from the shining vastness which lay beyond that small door, from an effulgence of metal and other materials no human eyes of his time could look upon and believe possible. He reached Isabella and the face he turned to her was so distorted by horror that she lifted her hands to it to bring a restoration.

'What is it. my Lord?' she asked breathlessly. 'What is within?' Ranulf shook his head slowly, unable to lay tongue to any description of the frightfulness he had seen.

He could not bring himself to confess that the blue engine had punished his curiosity with madness, that what he had seen within the tiny box was a deranged vista rivalling the extent of his castle, that the demons of this morning had come direct from Hell.

''Tis...'tis...' The baron passed his hand through the air in front of him in an attempt to express a vast emptiness.

The Master watched the scene from the shadow of the far wall noting, with gratification, the effect of Ravioli's wild-eyed inarticulateness on his liegemen. They looked upon the blue engine and cringed from it. His plan was proceeding perfectly. His old enemy was even now closely mewed up with prophesies, libels and dreams drawing the web tighter about him at every turn. A disturbance from the stairs sent the Master deeper into shadow.

The Doctor and Tegan were thrust into the Hall on the sword points of Hugh and his men-at-arms. Ranulf's delight in seeing the demons captive restored something of his composure though not enough to retrieve his sword that had fallen near the TARDIS. He signalled that it be brought to him and a detachment of his liegemen formed a protective spearhead facing the TARDIS to recover it.

With his sword in his hand the baron felt less vulnerable now that he knew he was surely dealing with demons to whom he must show no quarter.

The Doctor saw the TARDIS without surprise. He had guessed the Master would present it as further evidence of his diabolism and guessed, from the open door, that his status as an emissary of the Prince of Darkness had been confirmed by a peep inside. How do you begin to explain the TARDIS? 'You see, there was this man called Sir Isaac Newton who hasn't been born yet, but in about four hundred years from now ...' The Doctor couldn't help smiling as he thought of the generations of school children who had wrestled with quantum mechanics and relativity and pronounced them absolute hell. What other way was there to explain the interior of his time-machine? Tegan saw the smile and grimaced. Ranulf interpreted the Doctor's smile in a different way.

‘Aye. We have your engine, demon.’

‘So you have. Where was it?’

‘Where you left it, with the King. You thought to kidnap him but your plan is foiled.’

So, thought the Doctor, the Master had anticipated him.

He’d told Ranulf not only where to find the TARDIS but what its intended use was to be. And to remain out of sight through it all, not directing operations but gently influencing a sequence of events: it was brilliant, quite brilliant. There was but one course of action for the Doctor; to take the TARDIS back to where the impostor King was housed, and to find Turlough. Only then could they, fingers crossed, leave for London. But how to get into the TARDIS? He was firmly held and it wasn’t possible to gain the old girl by force. But if he could create a diversion

... If only he had a box of matches - that had worked wonders in the past.

Ranulf addressed himself to his son. ‘What of Geoffrey?

Where is our cousin?’

‘On his way to London,’ said the Doctor calmly.

‘You lie!’ accused the baron.

‘On my honour. He should be there in a few hours ...

depending on the state of the roads ... and if there are no ...’

The Doctor looked directly at Tegan and inflected the word with great deliberation. ‘... diversions.’

Tegan knew he expected something of her but her aching head wouldn’t help. ‘Diversions?’ she repeated.

‘Yes. You know what a diversion is, don’t you?’

‘What sort?’

‘Get into the TARDIS! The coordinates are already set.’

The Doctor knew such an instruction was beyond the comprehension of any but Tegan and he tried to continue in that vein.

‘Let’s be at hammer and tongs.’

‘Hammer and tongs?’

‘Turn me in! Turn King’s evidence!’

Tegan looked blank. The exchange between the two demons meant nothing to their listeners, but Hugh glowered with sudden suspicion.

‘Father! They cast spells!’

‘Part them!’ commanded Ranulf.

The Doctor and Tegan were drawn further apart to diminish the effectiveness of their sorcery and the Doctor saw at once that if the logic of this move was extended and they were parted completely his purpose would be defeated. There was something of desperation in his voice as he shouted, ‘Sir Geoffrey is not within the engine!’

It was the change of mood that got through to Tegan.

The Doctor wasn’t given to making fatuous remarks in an emotionally charged voice. Then she saw and heard the reaction to the Doctor’s hysterical statement and what was in his mind became transparently clear. ‘Lord Ranulf!’ she cried. ‘Help me! Please help me!’

The aging baron knew his demons as well as the next man. He knew about the incubus who preyed on sleeping women, but wasn’t the succubus who preyed on sleeping men so very much worse? But set against this was the inculcation of responsibility during his privileged upbringing. It caused him to react instinctively to

a call from a damsel in distress. It also caused him to glance a little furtively at Isabella. But what was uppermost in Ranulf's mind was the demon Doctor's declaration that Geoffrey was not within his engine. The baron had seen within that engine and although he'd seen no sign of Geoffrey that did not mean that his kinsman could not be held somewhere in that awesome vastness. Ranulf was convinced of one thing: the demon was a liar. Had he not proved it so? Therefore. could it be that his cousin did indeed languish within that vile engine?

'Help me!' cried Tegan again. 'I want nothing more to do with the Doctor! Save me from him!'

Thanks be to Gallifrey, thought the Doctor, she's got the message. Now it was to be hoped that she could sustain the performance long enough and inventively enough to get herself into the TARDIS. He came in on cue.

'Dare you betray me?'

'Yes!' shouted back Tegan. 'I dare! I dare! You have taken Sir Geoffrey from his family!'

Better and better, thought the Doctor. And without telling a lie, too. Clever girl! 'You shall pay for this,' he bellowed. 'You shall burn in torment!'

'Silence him!' thundered Ranulf.

Tegan's heart missed a painful beat. There were more ways than one of silencing a man but one of them was irrevocable. She watched the men about the Doctor react indecisively. It was generally believed that putting a demon to the fire was the only way to be rid of him; that any other attempted riddance must consign them over to everlasting flames.

'Silence him, I say!'

The problem was solved by the initiative of a man-at-arms behind the Doctor. He tugged off the Doctor's belt and pulled up the hem of the surcoat, to hold it then in place across the Doctor's mouth with the belt pulled tightly behind the neck. Ranulf was satisfied although Tegan, relieved of her fear that the Doctor would be silenced for ever, wanted to giggle. How often had she wanted to silence the Doctor in such a peremptory fashion!

Ranulf turned to her.

'Where is my cousin, Geoffrey de Lacey?'

Tegan was still held firmly by two men-at-arms who showed no inclination to slacken their hold, If she was to reach the TARDIS she had to be free of them. She resorted to the irresistible violence of feminine wiles.

'They're hurting me!' she pouted.

'Release her!' ordered Ranulf. The men let Tegan go and she exaggerated the rubbing of her arms io suggest unnecessary and ungallant treatment. 'Thank you, my Lord,' she said demurely. The Doctor's eyes, above his rudimentary gag, shone with admiration.

'Now, where is my cousin?'

'I don't know,' said Tegan truthfully.

'You do not know?' The baron raised his arm and looked along its length at the TARDIS. 'Is he not within?'

Tegan looked at the Doctor, uncertain about how to respond. The Doctor took his cue and responded for her by beginning a gargantuan struggle accompanied by as much frightening sound as the gag would allow. Ranulf was answered. From the

demon Doctor's reaction it was quite clear his cousin was captive in the blue engine. Sword at the ready he advanced courageously on the TARDIS.

'Nay, father, I will go.'

Ranulf rounded on his son. 'Stand back!' Such was the look in his father's eyes Hugh had to obey. 'Thou hast not seen beyond that door. I have. I, and I alone, shall enter into Hades.'

Hugh fell back and Ranulf turned again to the TARDIS.

As Hugh made a tentative move to follow, Isabella took him quickly by the arm. She knew that if her son were to enter the blue engine from Hell nothing could prevent his father from following after to save hirn. Ranulf made the sign of the cross and again moved on the TARDIS.

'My Lord!' Tegan fluttered forward to intercept him.

'Let me go into the engine!' Her eyes were wide with innocent appeal as she went on. 'If you want to see your cousin again, you must let me go into the engine.'

The implication was clear to all. If the baron entered the engine, demoniacal forces lying in wait there would cause him or his cousin harm. Ranulf tightened the grip on his sword but hesitated. He looked at this female demon who had reneged on her fellow and then he looked at his wife.

Isabella shook her head. The unhappy Ranulf was unsure of her meaning; not to trust the female demon, or not to enter the blue engine. Geoffrey must be rescued. He looked again at the TARDIS and then back at Isabella. She shook her head again, much more firmly. Still the baron vacillated. The Doctor's steady, unwinking eyes concentrated in a prayer, willing the man to yield. Tegan tried again. 'Please!' she begged. 'There must be no more harm done.'

Ramaf looked once more into her open, earnest eyes and stepped back, lowering his sword. Tegan restrained her frantic desire to run, thinking it might provoke a last moment panic. and walked steadily into the TARDIS. As she closed the door behind her the Doctor closed his eyes and offered up another prayer.

Tegan flitted to the control console and her hand hovered in a moment of uncertainty over the rotor control.

She had often seen the Doctor activate the central column that set the TARDIS in motion but this had to be preceded by one of two possible operations; the use of the metastasis switch or the transit switch. She had been told that the coordinates were set, and she knew that the TARDIS

would return whence it came once she'd got it in motion, but the desperate need to do this quickly panicked her, The Doctor counted the seconds, the agonising passing of which could mean only one thing. Surely she must know what to do by now He opened his eyes to assess the chances of escape by taking advantage of the rapt, tense expectation of the Fitzwilliam household. What he couldn't see was that the Master, invisible in the blackness of the far wall, was equally as fraught. If Tegan failed to move the TARDIS the Doctor would. most certainly be destroyed, but the Master's design would also be denied the development needed for its fulfilment.

Tegan's trembling hand dithered between the two switches. Then, telling herself that if one didn't work she could try the other, she settled for the transit switch and quickly activated the rotor control. Immediately the central column began its rise and fall motion that. signified the TARDIS was in flight and Tegan closed het eyes, sighing with relief.

The whinnying that always preceded the dematerialisation of the TARDIS fetched a cry of terror from Ranulf's liegemen and men-at-arms, and the Doctor felt the grip on him slacken. As the TARDIS faded and then disappeared, all but the baron arid his wife and son fell to their knees, and, dismayed at the vanishing of Geöffrey in the infernal blue engine, none of them saw the Doctor slip away into the thickening darkness, But the Master saw his enemy's exit and stretched his wide, vulpine smile as he, too, melted away into the shadows.

Ranulf, in transports of horror and anger at having been tricked, turned to find the demon Doctor gone.

'The demon has escaped!' he howled. 'Up off your knees, you caitiffs! Find him! Let him not escape the castle!'

The baron's men scrambled to some semblance of shocked order and poured down the stairs in pursuit of the dissembling demon.

'Wait!' yelled Hugh. Some of the men at the rear of a precipitate van heard him and turned back. 'Follow me!'

He crossed the Hall to the rear stairs with the men at his heels, leaving a desolate Ranulf to comfort a bereaved Isabella.

Tegan looked at the central column moving inexorably up and down and wondered how much further it was to the King's chamber. She had thought the passage of the TARDIS from the Great Hall to a floor above would take no time at all but now another thought began to take shape

- a shattering one.

Turlough slowly came to his senses; the pain in his head and jaw being the first. Sight followed as he blinked his eyes into focus and saw himself to be in art area against the castle wall enclosed by a range of stave hurdles. As his reason returned it told him that the droppings on the straw on which he lay and the twists of dirty fleece caught on die staves belonged to sheep. Then he recalled that he had helped Sir Geoffrey to find the shelter of this sheep pen and that the knight hail begged him to recover the frightened horse and ride to London in his place.

Turlough had been trying to explain the impracticability of this idea when a mailed fist had moved abruptly.

Turlough pulled himself up and looked towards the distant gate. There was still light enough to see the twin trails of blood that told him the courageous knight had gone after the horse himself. The crossbow bolts had not bitten deep because of first having to penetrate the chain mail but the loss of blood was considerable. A noise from the keep dropped Turlough to his knees. He saw the men-at-arms rattle down the steps and race for the open gate. At the sight of blood they bayed along the marked trail from the bailey to the open country beyond, ignoring the tell-tale drops that pointed to the sheep pens. Turlough saw nothing else for it but to keep to the rendezvous indicated by the Doctor. He picked his way cautiously to the stables.

The Doctor had climbed the stairs to the third level of the castle. His stealthy way in the fading light, as yet unsupported by wall torches, had been unimpeded.

Ranulf's full force, although divided, was in pursuit of a quarry presumed to be attempting to escape the castle, not to penetrate it even deeper. The Doctor hesitated before climbing higher. By his reckoning the staircase continued to the ladder that gave access to the battlements. He must now have reached the level of the King's chamber and this, to his delight, was confirmed by the harsh tones of the impostor King's voice with the lute accompaniment:

‘We sing in praise of total war

Against the Saracen we abhor.’

The Doctor moved quietly in the direction of the sound, feeling his way long a partition wall.

‘To free the tomb of Christ our Lord

We’ll put the known world to the sword!’

The Doctor had reached a corner on the partition which he guessed to be a door recess, the voice being at its loudest now. He felt for a handle.

‘There is no greater glory than ...’

The Doctor’s hand found what it sought and silently lifted the latch. As he gently pushed open the door the voice swelled accordingly.

‘To serve with gold the Son of Man.’

The Doctor eased carefully forward into the lighted area of the chamber, taking in the decorative differences from the floors below. Whereas the Great Hall and the chamber offered to the Doctor were but functionally adorned, this chamber - the royal chamber - reflected the warm, exotic culture of the near east. Colourful silks hung front the walls and the floor was covered with not only rugs of animal skins but with woven oriental carpets of rich and varied hue. Not only had jewels and precious metals been plundered from the Holy Land; a way of life had also been brought back from the Crusades.

‘No riches here on Earth shall see

No scutage... Welcome, my demon!’

The voice was undoubtedly that of the tyrannical King who had terrorised Fitzwilliam Castle for two days, but the figure from which that voice emanated came as a considerable shock to the unsuspecting Doctor. For what he was looking at was a gleaming metallic android, seated in a throne-like chair and holding a lute. Firelight licked the silver surface of the alloy giving it, momentarily, the texture of human flesh but, although in the shape of a man, it lacked all semblance of humanity: it was an unadorned, characterless, contrived piece of machinery. So this was it.

The Master’s handiwork. A basis upon which had been built yet another masterly disguise. Knowing his arch enemy’s vanity, the Doctor realised the Master couldn’t be far away, he had only to tease him into the open.

‘Your Majesty appears in need of a doctor,’ he said.

‘Allow me to introduce Kamelion.’ The Master stood by an ornate arras, poised like a fencer on the point of salute before engagement. The Doctor was more willing to accept this challenge than that of Sir Gilles Estram who he had beaten earlier. But would this duel prove as easy, he wondered. The contest that afternoon he now knew to be a trap into which he had fallen like a novice, a tenderfoot.

This time he would tread more warily.

‘Your work?’ he asked.

The Master spread his hands in a gesture of massive humility. ‘Alas, honesty forbids such a claim. Kamelion is the tool of an earlier invader of Xeriphas and instrumental in my escape from the benighted planet.’

In spite of himself the Doctor was fascinated by the silver android, wondering how it could possibly be transformed into a human being, let alone a specific one.

‘ *This* is your King John?’

‘Look again!’

The android changed shape, texture and character in an amazing metamorphosis, becoming King John before the Doctor's astonished eyes. He looked at the phenomenon in open admiration. 'Oh yes,' he murmured. 'Impressive.'

'A weapon used by the invaders of Xeriphas. A decoy capable of infinite form and personality.'

The Doctor's response was one of horror and loathing.

Such an artefact used as a weapon was a concept of absolute evil; a conscript monster made in the image of God. The Doctor was aware that his enemy took for granted his natural admiration for the technical *tour de force*, but he was also aware that the Master's vanity needed to inspire the very horror he was now feeling. He willed composure into his facial muscles and said coolly, ' Diabolical.'

'Well said, my demon!' cackled Kamelion. 'We are a complex mass of artificial neurons.'

The Doctor ignored the android, addressing himself to the Master. 'And controlled by?'

'Nothing more than simple concentration and psychokinesis,' replied the Master primly. 'Look again!'

Kamelion metamorphosed again and the Doctor hated himself for not being able to contain his wonderment when confronted with the image of himself. He even retreated a step in reflexive fear as his double stood up, fetching a satisfied chuckle from the Master. But his doppelganger was not about to offer his hand in greeting. He held up the lute which promptly turned into a cricket. bat. The bat was lifted in an elegant backswing as the left leg went down the line of an imaginary hall and, with the left elbow well tip and the head well down, the Doctor's double completed an impeccable and stylish straight drive. The Master applauded with irony.

The Doctor's compelled admiration helped him quickly to recover his equanimity. 'Can anyone play?' he enquired mockingly.

'Such as we,' answered the Master smugly, and he extended a hand by way of invitation. 'Please!'

The Doctor looked into the eyes of his double, unnerved a little by the mirrored concentration in them. Intensifying his effort he changed Kamelion's image into that of the Master.

'Quite masterly,' chuckled the Kamelion-Master.

'You flatter me,' quipped the Master. 'I prefer King John.'

Tegan pounded anguished fists on the control console, her frantic eyes transfixed by the remorseless movement of the central column. She had reversed the transit switch in favour of the metastasis switch as soon as she had overcome the shock at realising that the TARDIS must have overshot the set of coordinates. There had been a negative response arid she had mastered her panic sufficiently to remember not to rush into a manipulation of ill-understood controls that would make a sequence impossible to recall and so impossible to correct. With heroic restraint she kept her shaking hands bunched into safeguarding fists. sick with fear that she was already centuries and light years away from not so merry England.

Her eyes studied intently the ranks of levers, knobs and switches as she pushed back terror and drove herself to think straight. There *had* to be a logical sequence that would check the runaway TARDIS.

Sir Geoffrey lay on a hastily cleared table in the Great Hall.

his face ashen from loss of blood. Isabella held his limp hand and wept quietly. The dying knight moved his lips but there was too little breath to force sound between them. Ranulf bent lower. ‘Speak, cousin! Who has done this?’ Again the lips moved to no purpose. ‘Bring wine!’

cried Ranulf.

‘No, my Lord,’ said Isabella quietly. ‘He will choke.’

Ranulf turned a grim fare on the sorrowing group of rnen who had brought his kinsman back into the castle. He addressed his Herald.

‘Where was he found?’

‘By the river, my Lord.’

‘And the demons have escaped me,’ muttered the baron, bitter at being robbed of a just revenge.

‘There were three, my Lord,’ the Herald reminded him.

‘The one they called Turlough.’

Turlough had watched Sir Geoffrey being brought back and saw by the way he was being carried that the brave man was not dead. He had remained in the stables as instructed but daylight was going fast and he wondered if it would be better to go in search of the Doctor rather than wait for the Doctor to find him. If the TARDIS was in the keep either the Doctor or Tegan would have to leave it to find him. Using the TARDIS in search of Turlough wasn’t an operation the Doctor was likely to find feasible.

Distant sounds prompted Turlough to peer round the edge of the daub and wattle wall and look towards the side door of the keep. For a moment he thought it might mean the approach of the Doctor or Tegan or both but then realised he was listening to the movement of more than two people. When he recognised Hugh at the head of a number of men-at-arms he thought he might as well save him the trouble of looking for him and moved out of the stable. Whatever had happened in the keep since the shooting it must be clearly established by now that the Master was the culprit since Sir Geoffrey would have exonerated Turlough and, by implication, the Doctor and Tegan.

‘We have one!’ shouted Hugh breaking into a run. ‘Take him!’ Turlough was again the victim of an overenthusiastic arrest: all of ten men trying to lay hands on him.

‘All right! All right!’ protested Turlough. ‘I was coming anyway.’

Kamelion had reverted to King John. The Doctor moved slowly round the regal figure, examining it in the minutest detail. It really was a miracle of observation.

‘You must have studied the original very closely.’

‘And at first hand.’

The Doctor strained hard to sound casual. ‘So Kamelion here is Bad King John. You might say that he makes enemies and influences people.’

The Master’s wide smile very nearly expressed a little warmth as he purred with pleasure. ‘Aided and abetted by you, his demon, and your blue engine.’

‘Cunning of you to confirm the superstitions put about by the monks.’

‘Irresistible! And your arrival was most timely.’

‘A gift.’

‘How succinctly put!’

The Doctor again made a slow circuit of the Kamelion-King. ‘Your King turns the barons solidly against the true King. He is killed in battle or deposed... possibly in favour of King Philip of France. There will be no Magna Carta.

What do you think of it so far?’

The Master’s smile managed a little more warmth. ‘I couldn’t do better myself.’

‘Thus, the foundations of parliamentary democracy will not be laid. Oligarchic government prevails. The future of the planet is the chaos of warring dictatorships.’

The Master moaned in undiluted pleasure. ‘Only you, dear Doctor, can appreciate my art to the full.’

The Doctor’s voice hardened. ‘You can’t be allowed to alter the course of history ... even indirectly.’

‘Of course not. But how do you propose to stop me?’

10

A Battle Of Wills

Sir Geoffrey de Lacey lay unconscious on the table which had been pulled nearer the fire in an attempt to coax some warmth into his ice-cold limbs. Isabella and other women of the household had made the knight comfortable. The bolts had been removed and the bleeding stopped. The wounds were not in themselves serious but the loss of blood was and it had been decided not to move the knight from the Hall for fear of renewed haemorrhage.

The restive Ranulf had abandoned attempts to talk to his stricken cousin in order to increase the chances of his survival, but he hovered patiently in the hope that Geoffrey might regain enough strength to tell him something that could somehow lay one demon by the heels and give him the revenge for which he thirsted.

Turlough was pricked and prodded up the stairs and harrassed into the Great Hall by Hugh at the van of the jubilant search-party.

'Here is one not escaped!' called Hugh. Ranulf came quickly to meet the captive, the better to see him in the poor light. His prayers had been answered. Here was one on whom Geoffrey would be revenged. He pointed an arthritic finger that shook with anger.

'Vile villain! You have slain my kinsman!'

'I didn't do it!' yelled Turlough. Hugh saw with alarm the group by the table and hurried to it. 'Uncle Geoffrey?

Dead?' Isabella held out a hand to hold him from touching the wounded man. 'He is not dead, my son,' she said softly,

'but he is very weak for he has lost much blood.'

'He is dying,' whispered Hugh, aghast. He turned back to the terrified Turlough and moved on him menacingly.

'You shall die in torment, caitiff!'

'Hugh!' Ranulf pulled his son back from inflicting a premature, retributive mischief on the luckless Turlough.

'Father! He is mine! I found him!'

'You what!' spluttered Turlough. 'I was coming to meet you. And I tell you, I didn't do it.' He pointed at the group near the fire. 'Ask him, why don't you? Ask Sir Geoffrey!

He'll tell you I didn't do it. I was with him when it happened.'

Hugh came very close until he was nose to nose with Turlough who pulled his head back not so much from fear as from disgust at the rank breath. Did these people never clean their teeth?

'Of course you were,' breathed Hugh. 'How else could you have brought him to this? My father is right. Death shall not be quick for you. You shall die slowly in the fire.'

Turlough had considered this a possibility when entombed in the dungeon and the merit of rotting to death as against that of burning to death was only that it was probably less painful. To recall that consideration brought him out in a cold sweat.

'Why are you always threatening me?' he wanted to know. 'And without the slightest justification!' His voice rose imploringly. 'Ask Sir Geoffrey!'

'He cannot speak,' said Ranulf with a finality that made Turlough's skin creep.

'I was trying to help him!'

‘Help him,’ repeated the baron with rough irony, ‘to what end? To die?’

‘No! Don’t be so stupid!’ protested Turlough. ‘To help him to get to London.’

‘Why to London?’

‘To warn the King.’

‘The King is here.’

Fear and anger had raised the men’s voices in spite of soft, sibilant sounds from Isabella attempting to quiet them. Sir Geoffrey had begun to stir restlessly, as the noise around him broke into his semiconsciousness. Isabella watched her cousin as he forced open his eyes and made a great effort to speak. She called quietly and urgently to her husband. ‘My Lord!’

Ranulf went quickly to her side followed by Hugh. They too watched, with a growing impatience, as Geoffrey attempted to speak.

‘Cousin?’ prompted Ranulf.

‘King ...’ came faintly from Geoffrey’s motionless lips.

‘King?’ repeated the baron fiercely. ‘Yes?’

Two words came clearly from the back of the knight’s throat: ‘Doctor ... seek ...’ And then the eyeballs swam upwards and the heavy lids closed. Hugh looked at his father.

‘Seek the Doctor.’

‘Aye.’

‘Where? In hell?’

The baron looked lugubriously on the livid face of his cousin. ‘He has given up the ghost,’ he whispered. ‘God rest his courageous soul!’ Isabella gulped and her hand felt under the fur rug in search of a longed-for heart beat.

Ranulf slowly brought his attention back to his kinsman’s supposed assassin. Followed by his son, he moved to Turlough and their movement carried the threat of a dreadful purpose. They were stopped by a sharp intake of breath from Isabella.

‘His heart still beats! He lives!’

No one was more relieved than Turlough, who could already feel his feet getting very hot and was so scared he even fancied he could smell burning. ‘Listen!’ he entreated. ‘Next time he comes round ask him about me, will you?’

‘It will not save you, demon,’ promised Hugh.

‘You’ve got the wrong person, I tell you. You want the Master. He’s behind all this. Why don’t you find *him*?’

Turlough could see it coming: Hugh was getting nauseatingly near again.

‘How much longer must the flames wait, father?’

‘No, hold!’ rapped Ranulf. He pushed his son aside. ‘I will give you your life, demon ...’

‘Father!’

‘...in return for your two fellows.’

‘Father! No!’

Why don’t you shut up, thought Turlough. Ranulf had the same earnest thought for a vastly different reason. He had no intention of letting the demon go free to wreak yet more infernal mischief. He would perish in the fire with the others but first Ranulf had to know where the others were and his son must not be allowed to temper justice with impatience.

‘Thou shalt be Lord of this castle when I am dead, my son. Whiles I live, I remain the master of it.’

That's what you think, thought Turlough, relieved at the younger Fitzwilliam's retreat. The baron returned to Turlough.

'Where are the demon Doctor and the succubus called Tegan?'

'I don't know.'

'You know not?'

'All right. Have it your way! I know not. All I know is that they're looking for the TARDIS.'

'The TARDIS? What is that?'

'It's the police box. That blue thing.'

Ranulf was encouraged. This demon was answering his questions. It suggested that the capture of the other two might not be as difficult as he imagined.

'The succubus has taken this TARDIS.'

The baron watched the impact of this news ou the demon with intense interest. He saw the surprise quickly turn to fear. Had this succubus betrayed *both* her fellow demons?

'What's taken it?' asked Turlough, seeing all hope of being saved front becoming a pile of cinders going up in a puff of smoke.

'The succubus Tegan,' rumbled Ranulf.

'Oh!'

The baron was pleased to see what looked like relief flood into the demon's face. Could it be that the demon had not been abandoned? That the she-demon would return with this TARDIS? That she would return for both her fellows? Was fortune about to smile? Could all three now fall into his hands?

Turlough was relieved that Tegan had taken off to find him, but not a little surprised that the Doctor had let her do it. Why had he? Was the Doctor also looking for him?

No, that couldn't be. They would all get hopelessly lost. If Tegan was looking for him, the Doctor must be with or near the King. He thought out loud.

'I don't suppose anyone's seen the Doctor?'

Ranulf continued to watch the demon carefully. The answer to his next question could lead to the quick capture of all three.

'You know not where he is?'

Turlough could see no chance of escaping from his captors but there might be some mutual benefit from being reunited with the Doctor. By joining forces they doubled the chances of freedom from this nightmare. And. in any case, he was feeling very lonely.

'It's only a guess, mind you, but I think he could be with the King.'

Tegan was in a frenzy. The controls on the console swam in and out of focus before her. She'd tried every possible combination and gone through the agony of writing down the details of every attempted sequence, all to no effect.

She'd even activated the scanner only to find that the screen represented limbo. It was small comfort that she wasn't light years but probably only yards away from the destination set by the coordinates. So near and yet so far!

She shouted aloud. 'Think, you galah! *Think!* '

Galah! The word echoed in her aching head. It was the name of an Australian bird that, rightly or wrongly, was considered to be idiotic. It was used, therefore, in

Tegan's country as an epithet levelled at fools one didn't suffer gladly, among which poor Tegan now numbered herself.

Galah! She had it! The answer! In an instant she had it. A flush of linked sounds flowed through her mind with the urgency of an electric current. Galah-crowbar-birdbar-bar-bar-bar- *input bar!* She'd forgotten the input bar! Without it no contact was made between interconnecting circuits. It was a fail-safe device to prevent accidental activation.

Tegan gave vent to a great scream of joy and pounced on the cancel switch. She flicked the transit switch and punched the input bar.

The Doctor was smiling as widely as the Master, although he was deeply troubled by the non-appearance of his TARDIS. He had anticipated a certain delay, expecting Tegan to take up her responsibility with caution, but with what she had to perform she was long overdue. There was the slimmest possible chance that the TARDIS was behind the arras by which the Master had been standing when the Doctor entered the chamber but, since he'd not heard the materialisation, the TARDIS could only have arrived before he'd reached the chamber and that was unlikely because he'd not taken long to climb the stairs.

'I'm surprised at your detachment,' the Master was saying. 'You would do well, my dear Doctor, to ponder that you have played directly into my hand.'

'And into mine,' fluted Kamelion, now its pristine, shining self. It occurred to the Doctor that the android might have a neurological existence outside the control of whoever had dominion over it.

'It has a mind of its own?'

' *It?* ' repeated Kamelion indignantly. ' *It?* '

'Not only a mind of its own,' confirmed the Master, 'but susceptible and, as you heard, not incapable of what in some quarters is known as the sin of pride.'

'I have good cause to be proud,' insisted Karnelion. 'Am I not all things to all ...' - he hesitated fractionally - '...to all other things?'

'Observe its logic!' pointed out the Master, 'and apply the same quality to your own position! You reprove me for diverting the course of history when you are equally culpable.'

'I am?'

'You are,' insisted the Master smoothly. 'You well know that the King and his dead brothers are believed to be the Devil's work. Your interference here with your dreary TARDIS has only confirmed this. You and your miserable companions, because of my prowess, are now no more than discredited demons and, as such, you make a unique contribution towards altering the course of history.'

The Doctor, seeming to be listening attentively, had been pacing slowly, with a head nodding in agreement, towards the arras behind which he hoped the TARDIS might be.

'And your TARDIS isn't here,' continued the Master without pause. 'Your Tegan has failed you. The female mind is cunning but undisciplined.'

The Doctor knew the Master spoke the truth about the TARDIS but only because, in some way, it suited him to do so. And to know about Tegan he must have been a witness to that desperate scene in the Hall. The Doctor was becoming more aware by the minute that he was caught firmly in the enemy's web and that he would need all his strength of mind to free himself.

‘You should have thought more deeply before accepting my challenge,’ went on the Master. ‘But here you are now, hoist on your own petard. Which reminds me.’ He held out a hand. ‘My Compressor?’

‘It’s an instrument I prefer not to carry about me,’

confessed the Doctor.

The Master’s smile became frosty. ‘Moral scruples are such a great handicap.’

‘A handicap often increases strength and inspires invention,’ replied the Doctor coolly.

‘I challenge you to prove that statement. Where is my Compressor?’

‘Where you’ll have no difficulty in finding it.’

‘You *are* generous.’

‘Another handicap?’

The Master’s smile was fixed. What game was the Doctor playing? There was no denying he was generous. It was one of his most grievous character flaws since it was compounded of compassion, tolerance and charity.

Ruthlessness and single-mindedness were the prime virtues without which there could be no direction to existence, no hope of victory over the insidious forces of good.

His train of thought was interrupted by an urgent knocking on the door and Ranulf’s taut voice. ‘Your Majesty?’ The Master flicked a look at Karnelion and it once more became King John of England. ‘Enter!’ called the Kamelion-King.

The door opened and the baron came in ahead of Hugh and Turlough who was in the firm grip of two of Ranulf’s knights. The Fitzwilliams bowed and the Master shifted his position to reveal the Doctor. The baron was puzzled.

The demon Turlough had been right. The Doctor was here with the King but then so was the Master and the atmosphere appeared cordial, relaxed.

‘Your Majesty...’ began Rantdf and then faltered.

‘Speak, my Lord! You are among friends.’

The Doctor caught the mischievous gleam in the Master’s eyes. Friends? ‘The unfortunate baron was being presented with the prospect of the King continuing to consort with demons. Whatever the Doctor said or did he could do nothing to prevent the spreading stain of the calumny from Fitzwilliam Castle that King John was incurably tainted. The Doctor had never been faced with a more powerful challenge. He must, at all costs, keep his head.

Ranulf looked at the three in perplexity, uncertain of the Master’s role in the baffling complexity of events.

‘Sire, Geoffrey de Lacey has been brought down and is near death.’ The baron pointed a knarled finger at the Doctor. ‘He accuses ... that.’

‘It’s not true!’ said Turlough hotly. ‘Sir Geoffrey was shot by a crossbow. The Doctor didn’t do it. *He* did!’ And he looked straight into the eyes of the Master which remained wide and serene.

The Kamelion-King help up a hand. ‘It is not in dispute,’ he said blandly. ‘The Master was merely obeying our order.’

The Fitzwilliams were as shocked as Turlough. The Doctor recovered quickly from this surprise tactic of the Master, whose mocking expression clearly said, get out of that one!

The Kamelion-King continued quietly. ‘We abominate treachery and Geoffrey de Lacey is a traitor. So are you!’ A royal finger was pointed at Turlough. ‘You have betrayed the Master. Your apprenticeship as a demon is at an end.

We give him to you, Lord Ranulf. Do with him what you will!’

‘Now, wait a minute!’ objected Turlough. ‘Doctor, do something for ...’

‘If he speaks again,’ the Kamelion-King interrupted smoothly, ‘cut his tongue out!’

Turlough’s mouth snapped shut. His eyes went to the Doctor who acknowledged the look with one of his broadest smiles. A fat lot of good that’s going to be, thought Turlough.

‘We have need of the Doctor and the Master,’ went on the Kamelion-King. ‘They are our chief counsellors.’

The chief counsellors smiled benignly on each other.

The Master had decided to play out the charade to the end, defying the Doctor to deflect his purpose. But a plan had come into the Doctor’s detached and receptive mind that would expose his evil enemy for what he was. He saw but one way to convert the confounded Fitzwilliams from the Master’s concept of King John.

Ranulf’s face was haggard. The strain of the last two days had taken its toll and this new confrontation was fast sapping what remained of his courageous spirit. His knees ached intolerably and, as he moved his weight from one foot to the other, they came close to failing. Hugh took his father’s elbow in support, crestfallen that he had been duped by the Master. He should have known from the appearance of the Iron Maiden in the dungeon that here was yet another demon.

The Kamelion-King droned on, ‘Without the Doctor and the Master we would have no guidance on matters of state. But take the apprentice! He has outgrown his usefulness. Put him to the fire!’

The baron and his son turned their eyes on Turlough more in sorrow than in anger. Turlough opened his mouth and then shut it again quickly. The Doctor directed a look at the Kamelion-King which was intercepted with total understanding by the Master.

‘All right, my dear Doctor,’ he murmured, your will against mine. So be it!’

Ranulf signed to Hugh that the audience was at an end and that they should retire with the disowned demon. The Fitzwilliams bowed to the King and backed to the door.

‘Wait!’ called the Doctor. ‘I have something to show you.’ The call gave the Master the advantage of an unfair start as the two Time Lords joined in a battle of wills for the possession of Kamelion. The Fitzwilliams waited, as bidden, and watched the two demons stare in hypnotic concentration at the King. Turlough’s tightly shut mouth sagged slowly open as he saw the King become as inanimate as a statue before beginning slowly to dissolve.

Stifled gasps and moans of a new fear greeted the sight of still more sorcery as the King’s fudged image began to reshape.

‘What ails the King?’ choked Ranulf. Both the Doctor and the Master were now rigid in their concentration, nerves straining to the utmost in a contest as brutish as any wrestling match. The Master began to tremble. The movement was barely perceptible at first, but soon his whole body was shaking uncontrollably. Turlough looked with growing concern at the Doctor whose face was tight with stress but whose frailer frame held quite still. A croon of terror broke from Ranulf and Hugh began to gibber.

The two knights let go their hold on Turlough and blundered from the chamber with barely repressed screams as the King changed into none other than the Master. The Doctor spoke with difficulty through rigid jaws.

‘ *That* is your King, Lord Ranulf.’

‘The King! The King!’ quavered the baron. ‘Where is the King?’

‘That is the King,’ grated the Doctor again.

The Master, defeated and drained of strength, pointed at the Doctor and screamed, ‘Kill him!’

‘No!’ shouted Turlough and grappled with Hugh as the baron ripped out his sword.

Tegan was nearly out of her mind in disbelief as she stared at the central column which was still rising and falling in steady motion. She shouted her frenzied thought: ‘I know I’ve done it! I know I have! Oh, you stupid ... !’ And she kicked the base of the control console so hard she howled with the pain.

Ranulf’s sword was pulled back in order to throw his full weight into the lunge that was to run the Doctor through, and Turlough was yelling for the Doctor to save himself, when the TARDIS whinneyed into existence behind the Kamelion-Master.

The Doctor immediately lost

concentration, and Ranulf and Hugh were distracted by the noise. Turlough saw his chance. As the Kamelion-Master reverted to the Kamelion-King Turlough grabbed the baron’s sword and ran to put the point at the Kamelion-King’s throat.

‘Back!’ he yelled. The confused Fitzwilliams saw what to them was their King in danger of his life and held back instinctively. Turlough’s eyes darted from one to the other and also took in the Master who was still in the throes of his sudden debility.

The Doctor, as cool as an experienced boxer, was concentrating on the Kamelion-King once more. Turlough looked at him, surprised that he seemed not to realise that his retreat to the TARDIS was being covered.

‘Come on, Doctor!’ he urged and looked quickly back at Ranulf and Hugh. Father and son were agape. Turlough turned his head to look at what had attracted their astonishment. There, where but moments before the Kamelion-King had been standing, was the figure of Tegan.

‘Come on, Turlough!’ said the Doctor briskly. ‘Look lively, now!’ Moving quickly, he took the Kamelion-Tegan by the hand and pulled her towards the TARDIS in time to meet the real Tegan limping out of it. He bundled them both in at the door and turned to tug the dumbfounded Turlough into the time-machine.

The Master had recovered sufficiently to shout, ‘Stop them!’ But Ranulf and Hugh could only continue to gape in stupefaction as the TARDIS began to whinney. The Master bunched a furious black fist at the dematerialising TARDIS.

‘Fools! Medieval misfits! Don’t think you’ve won yet, Doctor!’ And, ignoring the Fittwilliams, he went hurriedly from the chamber.

Ranulf and Hugh looked at each other with the mutual wonder of those who would be assured that they had shared the same dream - the same nightmare.

Tegan and Turlough suffered the same experience. They were agog at an unperturbed, relaxed Kamelion-Tegan returning their amazement with an aloof insolence. Tegan turned her flabbergasted face to her companion.

‘Do you see what I see?’

‘I... I think so,’ muttered a marvelling Turlough.

The Doctor, who was now concentrated on the control console swiftly adjusting coordinates, threw a look over his shoulder and the Kamelion-Tegan reverted to its android persona. ‘Let me present Kamelion,’ he said gracefully and opened a panel in the console to take out a small phial. ‘And I want you all to stand by,’ he added. ‘I won’t be long.’

Isabella and the other women drew back from their place by Sir Geoffrey, shrinking with dread from the noise and vision of the TARDIS as it materialised in the Great Hall.

There was a flutter of trepidation as its door opened and the Doctor emerged and strode towards the wounded knight. Isabella was quick to recover her courage. Shaking with fear she ran forward to put herself between the Doctor and her vulnerable kinsman. The Doctor stopped immediately and held up his hands.

‘Lady Isabella, I mean no harm to Sir Geoffrey. I’ve returned to help him. Please believe me.’

The brave woman stood her ground. She looked at the seemingly open, honest face that had undergone so many bewildering changes since she’d first seen it, her long neck holding her head defiantly high. The Doctor went on gently.

‘I have never told you an untruth. I am no demon. I have come only to help.’

Isabella thought back over the tormenting events of the day, from the time when the blue engine had brought these frightening strangers. The poor woman looked into the wide blue eyes and had to admit to herself that this Doctor had always denied he was a demon and she had heard him declare that Geoffrey was not in his engine, a declaration that had proved to be true. And, although still taut with fear, it was clear to her that he had no intention of removing her from his path by force. She wavered and, as if able to read her thoughts, the Doctor smiled his most enchanting smile - the one demonic talent he possessed.

Isabella stood aside.

The Doctor moved to Sir Geoffrey and felt for the pulse in his neck. Satisfied, he drew back the rugs to examine the neatly dressed wounds and nodded his approval. ‘He’ll be all right,’ he said confidently. ‘He’s a strong man and will soon make up the blood, but he needs rest.’ He held out the phial. ‘Give him this! It’ll help.’ He renewed his smile at Isabella’s suspicious hesitancy and proferred the phial again.

‘Please. When Sir Geoffrey’s able he’ll tell you about all that has happened here and that we,’ and his gesture included the TARDIS, ‘have been your friends. Lord Ranulf now knows that the Master was your only enemy and the enemy of your King. We’re leaving you now. But don’t worry, you have no more to fear front the Master.’

The hand Isabella held out for the phial still trembled slightly. ‘Thank you,’ she said. The Doctor relinquished the phial but retained her hand long enough to bow over it and impress upon it a light kiss.

‘Goodbye, my Lady.’

‘Farewell. Doctor.’

The Doctor went jauntily back to the TARDIS and entered it as Ranulf and Hugh came into the Great Hall from the stairs. The baron joined his Lady and together they listened and watched without fear as the TARDIS

dematerialised front their lives, if never from their memories.

Tegan and Turlough were looking Kamelion over with a clinical curiosity that the android considered to he an unwarranted derogation of its dignity.

‘What is it?’ wondered Tegan.

‘ *Who* is it, if you please,’ requested Kamelion with metallic contumely.

The Doctor was again busy at the control console, looking for evidence of possible maladjustments made by Tegan.

‘It’s a long story that appears to have begun on Xeriphas.’

‘And who knows when it will end?’ intoned Kamelion.

‘Oh, it ends now, with the Master,’ stated the Doctor unequivocally.

‘How?’ demanded Tegan. ‘The Master has lost Kamelion along with his attempt to unseat King John.

What’s more I’ve jammed the dimension circuits of his TARDIS with his own weapon. He’ll finish up anywhere but where he wants to go. Hoist on his own Compressor.’

The Master bared his teeth savagely. Cedric, the reluctant gaoler, extended the jangling keyring, with his arm stretched to the limit of its sinews, and it was snatched from his hand. Cedric watched the Master unlock the door and dash into the dungeon. Seconds later he jumped at a loud plop like the sound of a cork exploding from a very large bottle. There was no further sound save the dripping of water and the guttering of the wall torch.

Cedric licked lips made drier by the thought of large bottles. He crept quietly to the still open door and peeped cautiously into the dungeon. It was quite empty. Even the Iron Maiden had gone. Cedric offered up a prayer and went in search of another stoup.

The Master hurled his Compressor down in a cold fury. He who had trapped the Doctor into becoming an accessory to his own devilish schemes had been trapped in turn and his TARDIS was now out of control until such time as its power was exhausted. Never again would he be deceived by the Doctor’s assumed guilelessness, and at their next encounter - for there would surely be one - he would despatch his arch-enemy for all time.

The Doctor had changed from his thirteenth-century garb into his best Edwardian Lord’s long-room gear.

‘Well, and now where are we going after that little lot?’

asked Turlough.

‘Any preferences?’

Tegan opened her mouth and the Doctor raised his hand.

‘I know. Don’t tell me! London Airport.’

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